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THE LIFE  
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# THE LIFE OF PETER.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE YEARS OF OBSCURITY.

1. INTEREST OF PETER'S LIFE. The Apostle whose career we are to study yields to none of the Twelve in the interest of his life, the charm of his character, or the importance of his work. In the Gospel histories he retains a peculiar relation at once to Jesus and to the disciples. He is the man whom the Master oftenest singles out for special dealing, whether in honour or in rebuke, and on whom he lays the burden of special responsibility. As long as he appears in the narratives of the New Testament, he moves among the brethren the central figure, to whom all look. In the earliest stage of the founding of the Church, he is the commanding influence, the pioneer whose work fills as large a space in the first half of the Book of Acts as that of Paul in the second. He is the Apostle of the Circumcision in the same sense as Paul is that of the Uncircumcision, and there is much to show that the one was on terms of intimacy and confidence with the other. It is under the shield of his name that the Church of Rome has sought to establish her exclusive claims. It is as his successors that the proudest of the Popes have ventured to advance their stupendous pretensions. One of the two foremost missionaries of the Cross to whose faith and toil is mainly due the planting of the Christian Church, and himself emphatically a man of action,

he holds sacred rank also as a preacher and a writer. His discourses are preserved for us in the Book of Acts, and among the Epistles of the New Testament there is a priceless legacy which we owe to him.

**2. THE EMINENCE OF HIS POSITION.** The career of this man is the career of the leader of the original Twelve. His eminence appears in many ways and on most occasions. It is indicated by the place which is given to his name in the lists of the apostles. Of these we have four in the New Testament (Matthew x. 2-4; Mark iii. 16-19; Luke vi. 14-16; Acts i. 13); and in each this man is named first as Judas the traitor is named last. He heads the first of the three bands of four into which these lists distribute the Twelve, as Philip heads the second, and James, *the son* of Alpheus, the third. He belongs to the two notable pairs of brothers, the sons of John and the sons of Zebedee, who have the distinction of the earliest and closest connection with Christ, who are introduced at times as a company by themselves, and address Him with the freedom of confidential friends, as when on the Mount of Olives they question Him privately about the fate which He announced for the Temple (cf. Matthew xxiv. 3, Luke xxi. 7, with Mark xiii. 3). He is one of the three to whom those foremost four were reduced in order to form the Lord's most trusted companions, the witnesses of His mightiest works, the selectest associates, whose minds He illumined with the glory of His transfiguration, whose fellowship and sympathy He craved in the exceeding sorrow of His own soul. He is one of the two who at times were chosen for special service even out of that holy trio (Mark xiv. 13; Luke xxii. 8), who were together on some of the most momentous occasions both before and after the Ascension (John xviii. 15, xx. 3-7, xxi. 20-23; Acts iii. 1-11, iv. 13-22), and in whose friendship characters as distinct as those of Martha and Mary were consecrated to their common Lord. He is the



one who repeatedly appears when out of the entire number Christ brings forward only one. He is the spokesman of the company, the choir-master of the apostolic band, the chief accustomed to rule and ever ready to act, whom Paul himself teaches us to regard as a pillar of the Church (Gal. ii. 9). It cannot but be of interest to study the character and trace the course of such a man. It should be a matter of thankfulness that the materials for the purpose are so ample, that it is not too much to say that we are told nearly as much about this one member of the Twelve as about all the others together.

3. HIS NAME. The Gospels indicate that he was known originally as Simon. This is but another form of the Old Testament Simeon (= "hearing"), the name given to the rough and venturesome son of Jacob and Leah who founded the tribe called after him. In the New Testament we find the name Simeon or Symeon applied to the aged saint who received the Infant Jesus into his arms in the Temple (Luke ii. 25), to the son of Juda and father of Levi who has a place in our Lord's genealogy (Luke iii. 30), and to the prophet or teacher, called also Niger, in the Church of Antioch (Acts xiii. 1). The term Simon is supposed by some to have been borrowed by the Jews from the Greeks, who certainly used it freely. By others it is explained as a contracted form of the older Hebrew Simeon. It was probably the current Rabbinical form. It was a favourite personal name among the Jews in the times subsequent to the Babylonian Exile, the liking for it being probably increased by the fact that it was borne by men like the great leader of the Maccabean house (1 Macc. v. 17), and the Priest Simon (Ecclus. i. 1-20), who held a deep place in the respect or the patriotic sentiment of the Jewish nation. We may gather even from the number of times it occurs in the New Testament itself how popular a name it had come to be. There it is borne, for example, by the

Lord's brother (Matthew xiii. 55 ; Mark vi. 3), by Zelotes, or the Canaanite (Matthew x. 4 ; Mark iii. 18), by the man of Cyrene (Matthew xxvii. 32 ; Mark xv. 21 ; Luke xxiii. 26), by the leper (Matthew xxvi. 6 ; Mark xiv. 3), by the Pharisee (Luke vii. 40), by the father of Judas Iscariot (John vi. 71), by the tanner (Acts x. 6, 32), by the sorcerer of Samaria (Acts viii. 9). It is possible that, even after the Apostle received his new name from Christ, the form Simon continued to be the current name in the Church of Jerusalem. Some point to Luke xxiv. 34 (where the Eleven and those with them meet the two disciples from Emmaus with the tidings "the Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to *Simon*"—as if that term came most naturally to the lip) in proof that the original name remained in general use in the circle of the disciples. The more Hebrew-looking form, Symeon, is given once or twice in the New Testament to our Apostle, and then with evident appropriateness. The first is in the account of the so-called Council of the Apostles at Jerusalem, where it is used by James, the head of the Jewish-Christian Church (Acts xv. 14, Revised Version). The second (where, however, the oldest documents vary to some extent between Simon and Symeon) is in the inscription of the Second Epistle of Peter, where the writer may wish to enlist the sympathy of his readers by setting in the foreground his own Jewish origin and the common platform of grace occupied equally by Jews like himself and Gentiles like them.

4. HIS PARENTAGE AND HOME. His father's name is mentioned several times by Christ Himself, and in slightly different forms. In Matthew xvi. 17 it is given as Jona, or rather Jonah ; in John i. 42, xxi. 15, 16, 17, according to the best readings, as John. There is a tradition that his mother was called Johanna. But she is nowhere named in the New Testament. He had a brother, Andrew (John



i. 40), who is supposed by some to have been his junior, as he is always named after him in the lists of the apostles. It is impossible, however, to say which of the two was the elder. There are only three passages (in addition to the lists of the apostles and the references in Matthew iv. 18; Mark i. 16, 29, xiii. 3) in which Andrew is prominent. These are all in the fourth Gospel, and give the same view of him as a man of "ready helpfulness" (Green). Compare John i. 40-42, where he brings "his own brother Simon" to Jesus, with vi. 8, 9, where he suggests the number of loaves and fishes available, and xii. 22, where along with Philip he tells Jesus of the desire of the Greeks. The native place of the brothers, as we learn from John i. 44, was the Bethsaida to which also Philip belonged. Two towns of this name seem to be mentioned in the Gospels.<sup>a</sup> One of these, known as Bethsaida of Galilee, lay on the western shore of the Sea of Tiberias, not far from Capernaum. The other was situated at the point where the Jordan enters the lake, in the district of Lower Gaulonitis, and was known as Bethsaida Julias, having been so named by Philip, the Tetrarch, in honour of Julia, the daughter of the Emperor Augustus. These two towns were the scenes of some of Christ's most memorable deeds. In the neighbourhood of the latter the feeding of the 5000 took place. The former is described as the scene of mighty works, the misuse of which brought Christ's woe upon it (Matt. xi. 21; Luke x. 13). It was to the former that Simon belonged. It was within the territory of Naphtali. But we cannot infer from that, or from any statement in the Gospels, the tribe to which he belonged. It is rarely that the tribe relation is mentioned in connection with the per-

<sup>a</sup> Dr W. Thomson, however, the author of the valuable work "The Land and the Book," whose opinion is of great weight, supposes that they were really parts, the eastern and western parts, of one town planted at the spot where the Jordan falls into the lake.

sonages of the New Testament (cf. Luke ii. 36; Acts iv. 36; Rom. xi. 1; Phil. iii. 5; Heb. vii. 14; Rev. v. 5). The place was beautifully situated on the lovely, changeful Sea of Tiberias, known in the Old Testament as the Sea of Chinneroth or Chinnereth (Num. xxxiv. 11; Josh. xi. 2; 1st Kings xv. 20), and in the New Testament as that of Gennesaret, so noted for its picturesque shores and busy populace. Simon's childhood and youth, therefore, were spent among scenes well fitted to leave a deep impression upon an open, susceptible mind such as his was. Many have attempted to describe the witchery of the Sea of Galilee. It has been compared to the Lake of Lucerne, the peerless sea of the four forest-cantons of Switzerland. It has been represented as "the Windermere of Palestine in point of size, its lake of Geneva in point of surroundings" (Reed). A recent traveller speaks of his first view of it as recalling in miniature the sight of the latter lake "from the crest of the Jura, as it is approached by the old Besançon road,—Hermon taking the place of Mont Blanc, the plain of Gennesaret recalling the Pays de Vaud, and the steep banks opposite, the bold coast of Savoy."<sup>a</sup>

**5. HIS EARLY OCCUPATION AND ASSOCIATES.** Fishing was the occupation that engaged many of the people of these parts. Simon seems to have been brought up to this occupation. We find him plying it till he was summoned to leave all and follow Christ. We find him resuming it when Jesus ceased to journey with the Twelve (John xxi. 3). From the circumstance that the father is so seldom mentioned in the Gospels, and then only by name, it has been inferred that he had died when Simon and his brother were yet quite young, and that Zebedee and Salome had acted the

<sup>a</sup> Tristram's "Land of Israel," p. 410. He says that his "first gaze on the Sea of Galilee, lighted up with the bright sunshine of a spring afternoon, was one of the moments of life not easily forgotten."

part of parents to the lads. If this inference is accepted, it gives an interesting view of the rise of the friendship between Peter and John, and leaves us to imagine the four youths, Simon, Andrew, James, and John starting in life together, beginning to work together, united from their boyhood as comrades and as learners of the fisherman's art. Fishing probably was a fairly remunerative trade. The lake was full of fish. Bethsaida itself means "house of fish," or Fishtown, as we might call it; and, if we can trust the account of travellers, it had a good right to the name.<sup>a</sup> There was a good market, too, for the produce among the villages and towns with which the neighbourhood was studded. Simon's family, therefore, is not to be regarded as altogether a poor one. Andrew and he seem to have been partners with John and James, and the ship in which Zebedee was left, when the call of Jesus came to his sons, is stated to have had "hired servants" on board (Mark i. 16-20). Simon himself nowhere appears in the character of a hired servant, but always in an independent position. There is repeated mention of a house of his in Capernaum, although the terms in which it is referred to do not make it certain that it was his own property (cf. Matthew viii. 14; Mark i. 29-30; Luke iv. 38-39). When he speaks, too, of having left all in order to follow Christ, he seems to speak with the consciousness of having given up what was of some value (Mark x. 28). These and other hints point to Simon's circumstances, in his father's house and later, as honourable in a social point of view, and as elevated above penury, if not actually easy.

<sup>a</sup> The author of "Rob Roy on the Jordan," pp. 344-45, gives a lively account of the great abundance of fish in the vicinity of Bethsaida, and of the attractions which they find in the warm waters and plentiful food furnished by the hot springs which flow in there. He describes them as crowding the water in a large semi-circle "by myriads round the warm river mouth," basking, tumbling, jostling, with their backs above the surface, dense shoals of them "moving in brigades as if by concert or command."



**6. HIS EDUCATION.** The child of such a home as that into which Simon was born would not be allowed to grow up entirely uneducated. It is true that in Acts iv. 13 we read that the Jewish dignitaries in Jerusalem were astonished at the boldness of Peter and John when they "perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men." But nothing more is meant by this than that they made no pretension to the professional knowledge in which the Scribes prided themselves. Their speech had nothing in it of the Rabbinical culture and phraseology which went for learning in these days, and this betrayed them to be mere laymen. They might be this, however, and yet be by no means without education. There is no reason to suppose that the youthful Simon ever sat at the feet of any eminent Rabbi as Saul of Tarsus did with Gamaliel. But, though left quite unversed in the painful niceties of the legal and theological lore that made the Jewish ecclesiastic, he would, in all probability, be instructed with care in the Scriptures, in natural history, in the great Messianic hope as it was then rudely understood, in the tradition of Israel, and in other parts of ordinary education. The Jews have ever been honourably distinguished for their zeal in education, and for the esteem in which they have held the teacher's profession.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> A recent Jewish writer expresses himself thus:—"Education, both religious and secular, has, in all ages and in every country, occupied a prominent position in the list of the more sacred obligations which our forefathers were anxious to perform." He speaks of the Jewish sages of the early Christian centuries as having honoured the school as "the very essence of life," the teacher's calling as "the highest and holiest of all pursuits," and the work of instruction as "Divine work." The memory of Joshua, the son of Gamla, is held in special regard as that of the man who, some eighteen centuries ago, was mainly instrumental in perfecting the ancient Jewish system, arranging for the erection of schools in every town and village, and for the compulsory attendance of children from the age of six or seven. The sayings of the sages include many like the following:—"The world exists only by the breath of our school children"; "a town which has no school and no school children should be demolished"; "When thou seest delightful gardens by a

**7. HIS ACQUAINTANCE WITH GREEK.** It is clear that our Apostle had not the culture or the knowledge of letters which Paul had. There is nothing to show that he had any familiarity with Greek literature or any claim to book-learning. He was able, nevertheless, in later life, as his First Epistle very clearly indicates, to write a good Greek style. Even though we may suppose Mark to have assisted him in this, and even to have written at his dictation, it still remains true that he was no mean master of Greek. And this is confirmed by other considerations, such as his conversation with Cornelius, the centurion of the Italian band (Acts x.), which in all probability would be in Greek. It is not unlikely, therefore, that in his youth Simon had received some instruction in Greek.<sup>a</sup> In any case he must have acquired in youth, whether in the school or otherwise, an acquaintance with Greek which, in course of time, ripened into ability to write as well as speak it with power. In those times the Jews were, to a considerable extent, bilingual, like the Highlanders of Wales and Scotland at present. A degenerate form of the tongue anciently spoken by the Hebrews, a form made up of mixed elements derived from Syria and Chaldæa, and known as the Aramaic or Syro-Chaldaic, was the vernacular. But alongside of it Greek, which was then the great language of the world, was spoken.

stream, and bright stars in the sky, then thou hast a picture of faithful teachers who nurse, foster, and watch the tender plants, and cause benign light to beam into the yet dark world of the growing youth"; "The teacher and the school children form the most beautiful ornament of mankind, and, like a most costly coronet of pearls intended for the adornment of queens and princesses, they are worthy of occupying the highest and foremost place in society." The Jewish historian, Josephus, says: "Our principal care of all is this: to educate our children well." See Spiers', "The School System of the Talmud."

<sup>a</sup> It is interesting to notice that the great Rabbis, at least those of the early Christian centuries, recommended even for Jewish females not only a sound training in religion and in domestic matters, but also instruction in a foreign language, particularly Greek.—Spiers' "The School System of the Talmud," p. 10.

The Old Testament itself circulated so freely in a Greek translation, that known as the Septuagint, that the quotations made by our Lord and His Apostles in the New Testament are found to be taken for the most part from that version. In Northern Israel Simon would have special opportunities for acquiring a command of colloquial Greek, as that district of the Holy Land was most visited by foreigners. It is to be noticed, too, that *Andrew* and *Philip*, the names of Simon's brother and fellow townsman, are of Greek form—a fact which, with many others, is taken to point to the familiar use of Greek by Jews in the great centres of population and industry.

8. **VALUE OF HIS EARLY TRAINING.** The kind of life to which we see the youth accustomed, in Bethsaida and on the lake, was exactly that which would go to form and strengthen many of the elements of character afterwards seen in the man. It has been said of the fisherman's business in life that "none other will commend itself so vividly to the reflecting mind except, indeed, the occupation of a shepherd," in respect of "taste and poetical fitness for association with the early life of the apostles" (Howson). But it also formed a very positive and helpful training of character. The toil, the danger, the endurance, the watchfulness involved in it went to make an open, energetic, hardy, courageous nature, —a man of a practical turn, quick to see, ready to act, apt, indeed, to feel keenly and move suddenly, but also patient in working towards an end, capable of adapting himself to new circumstances, and full of resource. The intercourse which he enjoyed, too, with all varieties of men, native and foreign, in Bethsaida and the neighbouring towns and villages, tended at the same time to make him less provincial, and to give him both a knowledge of men and a habit of placing himself alongside of them, which proved gifts of great value to the future Apostle.

9. **HIS GALILEAN NATIVITY.** Like all the



other members of the original Twelve, with the probable exception of the traitor, Simon was a Galilean, and he was that out and out. Much is implied in this. It means that he was brought up in the heart of the densest and busiest population in the Holy Land, in a district which has been compared to the manufacturing parts of England, a country famed for its industries, and so thickly peopled that nine cities are said to have been planted on the margin of the lake. The Galileans had a marked character of their own. They had a reputation for an independence and energy which often ran out into turbulence. They were, at the same time, of a franker and more transparent disposition than their brethren in the South. In all these respects, in bluntness, impetuosity, headiness, and simplicity, Simon was a genuine Galilean. The people of Northern Israel also spoke a peculiar dialect. They had a difficulty with the guttural sounds and some others, and their pronunciation was reckoned harsh in Judea. The Galilean accent stuck to our Apostle all through his career. It betrayed him as a follower of Christ when he stood within the judgment-hall (Mark xiv. 70). It betrayed his own nationality and that of those conjoined with him on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 7). Things had happened, too, in Galilee which, by report or by experience, may have impressed his mind. The rising of Judas of Galilee, which took place about A.D. 6, causing great popular ferment and intensifying the political feelings connected with the Messianic hope, was one of these. And he is always mindful of his native district. When he declares the Gospel to Cornelius, it is as the word which was published beyond all Judea, and began from *Galilee* (Acts x. 37).

**10. HIS LIFE PREVIOUS TO HIS INTRODUCTION TO JESUS.** Nothing is told us directly of the events of his life up to the period of his first meeting with Jesus. We may infer, however, that

he married during that period. His wife's mother is alluded to in the Gospels (Matthew viii. 14 ; Mark i. 30 ; Luke iv. 38). There is also a passage in one of Paul's Epistles (1 Cor. ix. 5), which speaks of him as a married man. For, though some interpreters, especially those of the Roman Catholic Church, have taken that passage to point simply to the practice of having a female attendant to look after his wants when travelling, it undoubtedly refers to Peter as having married a sister in the faith, and as being accompanied by his believing wife on his missionary journeys. Nothing further is known from the New Testament about Peter's wife, although it is supposed by some that she is referred to in 1 Pet. v. 13, the words there meaning, "*she* that is in Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you." There is a tradition that her name was Perpetua or Concordia, and that she was martyred along with her husband. It has been inferred from Christ's words to Peter in Matthew xix. 29, that he had children, and some take the phrase, "Marcus my son," in the closing salutations of the First Epistle of Peter (v. 13), in the literal sense. These suppositions, however, have very little foundation, and the last mentioned phrase is best understood to refer to one whose spiritual father Peter claimed to be, namely, the John Mark who is mentioned as Paul's companion on his first missionary journey (Acts xii. 25), the cousin of Barnabas (Col. iv. 10), and the son of that Mary in whose house Peter found refuge on his deliverance from prison (Acts xii. 12). During this early period, too, Simon appears to have become one of the Baptist's disciples, or at least one of his hearers. The Synoptical Gospels give us no account of the men of Northern Israel who had been drawn southward by the fame of the Baptist's ministry. But the Fourth Gospel offers a lively picture of these Galilean adherents. It speaks distinctly of two of these disciples of the Baptist—Andrew and another, who,

being unnamed, is left to be identified, according to the writer's habit, with the evangelist John himself. And as Simon was with them, and no other explanation of his absence from his distant Galilean home is hinted at, he is to be understood as being there for the same reason as the others (John i. 35-40). What he saw and heard while he waited on the ministry of John, pondering his testimony to the Kingdom of God, his call to righteousness and repentance, and the significance of his baptism, formed his immediate preparation for the recognition of the true Messiah.

#### POINTS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY.

1. *The tribal constitution in New Testament times.*
2. *The state of education among the Jews in our Lord's time.*
3. *The question as to the language usually spoken by Christ and the Apostles.*
4. *The different modes of fishing and the various kinds of nets employed by the Jews. References to these in the Gospels.*
5. *The Messianic ideas prevalent immediately before Christ's advent.*
6. *The state of popular Jewish feeling in Peter's boyhood.*
7. *Distinctions between the men of Northern and those of Southern Israel.*

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## CHAPTER II.

### EARLY ASSOCIATION WITH CHRIST.

11. HIS FIRST INTERVIEW WITH JESUS (John i. 40, 41). Simon comes very suddenly upon the scene. He is brought upon the page of the



Fourth Gospel in a way which has been compared to the abrupt appearance of Elijah the Tishbite in the current of the Old Testament history (1 Kings xvii. 1). He is introduced to us just as he is himself being introduced to Jesus. By this time he seems to have been residing no longer in Bethsaida but in Capernaum, the town which is spoken of as Christ's "own city" (Matt. ix. 1). Situated on the commercial thoroughfare between Syria and the south, occupied by a Roman garrison (Matt. viii. 5), apparently a custom-house centre (Matt. ix. 9, 10; xvii. 24; Mark ii. 1, 14; Luke v. 27), it was in various respects a place of great importance.<sup>a</sup> We cannot determine very precisely how old Simon now was. The date of his birth is nowhere given. Early Christian writers generally regarded him as well advanced in years at the time of his death. From what appears about his being married, it has been assumed that "his life ran parallel in its earlier years to that of our Lord and the Baptist."<sup>b</sup> All that we can safely say is that he may have been between thirty and forty years of age when he was first introduced to Christ.<sup>c</sup> The scene of this interview is in the district near the Jordan where the Baptist was preaching and baptising. The Fourth Evangelist is careful to name a place of such solemn interest. Our Authorised English Version calls it Bethabara (John i. 28), but the Revised Version follows the better authorities in preferring the name Bethany. It lay in Perea, the territory across the Jordan.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Modern travellers are much divided in opinion as to its exact site, some identifying it with the modern *Tell Hum*, which lies about a couple of miles south-west of the point at which the Jordan enters the Sea of Galilee; others with *Khan Minyeh*, about three miles further south, close upon the Lake, and at the extremity of the Plain of Gennesaret. Less likely places have also been proposed.

<sup>b</sup> So Dean Plumptre, *Epistles of St Peter and St Jude*, p. 6, and others.

<sup>c</sup> So Canon Cook in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*.

<sup>d</sup> It appears, therefore, that there were two places of the name of Bethany, this obscure village beyond Jordan, and the well-known Bethany of the Mount of Olives. The distance of the one from the

Here the Baptist had given his great testimony in depreciation of himself and in honour of Messiah (John i. 19-28). Here on the following day he had made his wonderful confession of Jesus as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29-34). Here, too, the day after, in the presence of two of his disciples, he had spoken again of Jesus as the Lamb of God. On hearing this witness, Andrew and John, who are identified as the disciples in question, followed Jesus,<sup>a</sup> and, on His invitation, went with Him into the place where He was then residing. We are not told where that was, but it was during this abode with Him, if not earlier, that they came fully to recognise Him as Messiah; and it was on their leaving this dwelling-place of Jesus that the interview took place between Andrew and Simon, which resulted in the bringing of the latter to the same Master.<sup>b</sup>

other may be inferred from the fact that it took our Lord apparently about three days to travel between them (cf. John x. 40, xi. 1, 17). As we have two places with the same name Bethany, so we have two Canas, two Ramahs, two Antiochs, two Bethlehems, and, as we have already seen, two Bethsaidas.

<sup>a</sup> How much is intended by the phrase "followed Jesus" in John i. 37, 40 is matter of dispute. Some hold it to mean nothing more than that they wished to know more about Him, and went after Him for that purpose. Others take it to imply distinct discipleship. Even if we cannot go the length of saying (with Westcott) that it expresses a "choice made once for all," we can speak of this act of following Jesus as the first step which was to decide their whole life (So Godet) and, in the happy phrase of an older interpreter, as "the first origins of the Christian Church."

<sup>b</sup> There is some difference of opinion as to the chronology here. The "tenth hour" referred to in John i. 39, is interpreted as 10 A.M. by those who think that the Evangelist adopts the Roman reckoning, and as 4 P.M. by those who think the Jewish mode is followed. The day on which Andrew brought Simon is supposed by some to have been the day after they abode with Jesus, by others to have been the same day. The order of events at this point of the Gospel history has largely been taken to be as follows: first day, the Baptist with the deputation from Jerusalem (John i. 19-28); second day, his testimony to Jesus (John i. 29-34); third day, his second testimony to Jesus (John i. 36-39); fourth day, the bringing of Simon (John i. 40-42); fifth day, the bringing of Nathanael (John i. 43-51); sixth day, no record, seventh day, the marriage at Cana (John ii. 1-11). But some of the best scholars identify the fourth day in this succession with the third

The words, "he first findeth his own brother Simon" (John i. 41), do not imply (although they are so understood by not a few) that Andrew and John both went in quest of Simon, and that Andrew anticipated John in reaching him. They rather mean that Andrew and John went each in quest of his own brother, and that Andrew found Simon before John found James. The Evangelist's entire method of narration, however, shows that in his view Simon was the important figure, and the bringing of him the event of foremost interest. The four comrades appear together here, as they also appear again, *e.g.*, in Matt. iv. 18 (with the parallels), Mark xiii. 3; and what the two of them in the glad surprise of their own discovery burn to report to the others is something that would profoundly move any Israelite—the tidings of the advent of Messias.

12. THE NEW NAME AND THE PREPARATORY CALL (John i. 42). Andrew, like John, had been indebted to the Baptist for the joy of finding the long-expected "Consolation of Israel." It was his own great work in life to make his brother a partner in that joy. What happened at the memorable meeting between Simon and Jesus? The vocation which lay before the man was intimated by the announcement of a change of name. Jesus at once recognising him,<sup>a</sup> declared that whereas at present he was known as Simon, he would hereafter be called *Cephas*. As in the cases of Abram, Sarai, and Jacob, changes in destiny or character are not seldom indicated in the Bible by changes of

<sup>a</sup> John expresses this by a significant term ("beheld," ch. i. 42), which occurs only once again in John's Gospel (in the "looking upon" of verse 36 of the same chapter), and denotes a fixed look or penetrating gaze. It is supposed by some to imply that Christ's recognition of Simon was due simply to His prophetic intuition, and that this surprised and impressed him. It is more probable, however, that Simon was introduced as his brother by Andrew. The term then would express the look of interest which Jesus fixed upon him, and perhaps His prophetic insight into his character and capabilities, to which expression was given in the new name.



name. This name is taken from the Aramaic vernacular, and corresponds to the Greek Peter, *Petros*, which means a piece of rock—"a *mass of rock* detached from the living rock" (Westcott). It is a term which becomes a natural emblem of firmness and stability, and it is used as such by the classical writers. On Christ's lips it implied that He understood the strength of Simon's character, gauged the great possibilities of his nature, and read beforehand what he was destined to be to Himself and to the brethren. Jesus speaks indeed in the future, "thou shalt be called." But not as if the possession of the name was postponed till the future. His meaning rather is that Simon was from that time forth to have the new name, and that he would make his title to it good. The importance of this occasion is indicated by what has been fitly described as "the circumstantiality of the solemn ceremony of the name-giving" (Meyer). The act formed the first step in that training for his high vocation which he was to receive at Christ's own hands, and prepared the way for the more distinct and decided call which was soon to follow. We are told nothing about the impression made on Simon. No word uttered by him in reply to Christ's announcement is reported. "He leaves the stage a mute actor, and we cannot tell with what feelings he listened to the address" (Reed). The new name lived alongside the old one, and gradually displaced it. The Aramaic form *Cephas* indeed occurs nowhere else in the Gospels. In these, as well as in the Book of Acts, he is Peter, or Simon Peter, or "Simon who also was named Peter." But it is the form preferred by Paul. See 1 Cor. i. 12 ; iii. 22 ; ix. 5 ; xv. 5 ; Gal. i. 18 ; ii. 9, 11, 14. In all these, even in the last two, the Revised Version follows the best documents in adopting *Cephas* ; in Gal. ii. 7, 8, however, the form Peter occurs. It is to be noticed, too, that our Lord Himself for the most part continues to use the name Simon. Luke xxii. 34 is an exception.

There is a purpose, perhaps, in the selection which He makes. Thus it is *Simon*, not *Peter*, that He uses when He singles this disciple out for warning (Luke xxii. 31, where also the transition to *Peter* in verse 34 is not without its solemn significance), for sorrowful reproach in the garden of the Agony (Mark xiv. 37), and for public restoration to office after a grievous fall (John xxi. 15, 16, 17). In each of these cases the use of the old name of nature instead of the new name of grace may have had its own painful meaning for the Apostle.

13. THE CALL BY THE LAKE (Matt. iv. 18-22; Mark i. 16-20; Luke v. 1-11). Events followed this first interview, such as the wedding miracle at Cana, the visit of Jesus with Mary and others to Capernaum, the purging of the Temple at the Pass-over season, the journey through Samaria, and others (John ii.-iv.), in which Peter may have taken part, although he is not specially mentioned in the narrative. When we next meet him the scene has shifted to Galilee. The first meeting, with the solemn name-giving, had opened terms of personal connection between Jesus and Simon. But it had not attached the latter to the former as a constant companion.<sup>a</sup> It would seem that Simon, as well as others, had by-and-by found his way to the Galilean home, and had resumed his ordinary work as a fisherman. So, after an interval which it is not easy to measure, we find him along with Andrew, James, and John by the Lake of Galilee. We have three different narratives to take account of here, and it is a question how these are related to each other. Those three synoptical narratives (Matt. iv. 18-22; Mark i.

<sup>a</sup> "It was desirable," says Neander, "that the first impression made on Peter's mind should continue to act on him in quiet—on which account Christ at first left him to himself; and when, by repeated operations, everything in his disposition was sufficiently prepared, he received him into the number of his disciples who afterwards accompanied Him everywhere."—*Planting of Christianity*, i., p. 369, Bohn's translation.

16-20 ; Luke v. 1-11) appear clearly to deal with an incident quite distinct from that in John i. 35-51. The circumstances are very different. In John, *e.g.*, the scene is in Judea or Perea, in the Synoptists Galilee ; in John there is no accompanying miracle, in the Synoptists there is ; in John the time seems somewhat earlier (nearer Christ's baptism) than in the Synoptists ; in John two persons are introduced—viz., Philip and Nathanael—who do not appear in the Synoptists ; in John no previous acquaintance is suggested between Jesus and Simon, while in the Synoptists that seems to be the case. But the question is also raised whether the three Synoptical Gospels report here one and the same event. It is affirmed by some excellent scholars that Luke's account is distinct from the others, that it records a meeting subsequent to the one dealt with by Matthew and Mark, and that the words "*they forsook all* and followed him," with which Luke (v. 11) closes his narrative, indicate that only then did the final and determining call come to Simon and his comrades. The three records certainly exhibit interesting points of difference. Luke's is fullest, dwelling with more detail upon the earlier section of the scene, and giving a vivid statement of the impression produced on Peter. Matthew and Mark, on the other hand, fix our attention more especially on the way in which Christ's call was conveyed to the several friends, and pass over various things instanced by Luke. It is best, nevertheless, with many of the most competent interpreters, to take the three narratives as reports of the same event. Thus it would seem that the partners have had a toilsome and unsuccessful night's fishing, and are engaged, two of them in mending the nets, and two of them in trying what is meant perhaps for a final cast in shallow water, when Jesus, pressed by the crowd, comes after them, and takes refuge in Simon's boat. He addresses the people from the vessel, and then



bids the crew launch out anew into deep water. Simon, prompt as ever with speech, explains at once the small promise of success which the experience of the night held out, and his readiness, nevertheless, at the Master's<sup>a</sup> word to try another draught. The mighty haul is taken which threatens to rend the nets and sink the boat. The point of the miracle was not the mere mass of fish ; for the lake swarmed with fish, and vast hauls might often be secured. "The shoals," says a recent traveller, describing his own experience, "were marvellous—black masses of many hundred yards long, with the black fins projecting out of the water as thickly as they could pack. No wonder that any net should break which enclosed such a shoal" (Tristram's *Land of Israel*, p. 414). The miraculous lay in the coming of the mass in such circumstances and at Christ's word. The effect on Simon's receptive mind is instantaneous.<sup>b</sup> The Master's possession of a holy, super-human power suddenly reveals itself to him, and provokes the overwhelming sense of his own sinfulness. He fears the nearness of a holy majesty so different from what he is himself conscious of, and gives quick expression to this in a request (so like that of the Gadarenes in terms, so unlike it in spirit ; cf. Matthew viii. 34) that Jesus might depart from

<sup>a</sup> Luke's word here (v. 5) for *Master* is one which is used by him alone among the New Testament writers, and only in application to Christ. See ch. viii. 24, 45 ; ix. 33, 49 ; xvii. 13—the other passages in which it occurs. It means *superintendent*, and is used by Luke perhaps as better suited to Gentile readers than the ordinary term *Rabbi* or *teacher*, which occurs in the other evangelists, but never in Luke. It may be noticed, too, that in Luke v. 4, while the second command, "let down," is in the plural, as requiring several hands for its execution, the first command, "launch out" (which also is the proper nautical term for getting out into deep sea), is in the singular, being addressed to Simon as steersman or pilot.

<sup>b</sup> "The manifestation of the Divine power to him in the exercise of *his own trade* was characteristic of the Divine operations generally in the history of Christianity ; he was thus led from the carnal to the spiritual. All his previous impressions were revived and deepened by this sudden exhibition of the power of a word from Christ."—Neander, *Life of Christ*, p. 172.

him. How much must an experience of this kind, which discovered him in humbling fashion to himself, and gave him to see more than he had yet recognised in Jesus, have contributed to the preparation of the man for the appointed work ! How much, too, the Master's "Fear not" (so frequent a reassuring charge in the Bible), and the distinct call, couched in terms borrowed from the event itself, which now follows ! The previous call had been simply personal and preparatory. This one is official. It is the call to become a disciple in the full sense of the word, and to give the constant personal attendance upon Jesus which the Jewish Rabbi expected of a disciple. It is instantly and completely obeyed by Simon and the rest, and the miracle becomes a sign of the work to which the call designates them.

14. THE HEALING OF SIMON'S MOTHER-IN-LAW (Matt. viii. 14-17 ; Mark i. 29-34 ; Luke iv. 38-40). From the scene on the shore we are carried next to Capernaum. Jesus and his friends went perhaps direct from the lake, or soon after the call there, to Capernaum, and into the Synagogue there, where the demoniac was cured (Mark i. 21-28 ; Luke iv. 31-37). From the Synagogue, as we learn from Mark and Luke, they came into a house which is called "Peter's house" by Matthew, the "house of Simon and Andrew" by Mark, "Simon's house" by Luke. Here Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, to which Luke, "the beloved physician," gives the professional name of "great fever," *i.e.*, "violent, burning fever."<sup>a</sup> The same type is said to prevail still in these parts. Magical cures were in vogue among the Jews. We get some idea of what these were from the prescriptions detailed in the Talmud. This kind of fever is dealt with there, and a remedy is prescribed for it, of which "the prin-

<sup>a</sup> Luke's familiarity with the terms and the matters of the physician's profession comes out repeatedly. See, *e.g.*, chap. v. 12 ; vi. 6 ; xxii. 50, 51 ; Acts iii. 6-8 ; iv. 22 ; xxviii. 8.

cial part is to tie a knife wholly of iron by a braid of hair to a thorn bush, and to repeat on successive days Exod. iii. 2, 3, then verse 4, and finally verse 5, after which the bush is to be cut down, while a certain magical formula is pronounced" (Edersheim's *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, i. p. 486). Only when one knows something of the condition of medical science so called in the Holy Land in our Lord's time, can he understand the pathos of such statements in the Gospels as that about the woman who "had suffered many things of many physicians" (Mark v. 26). Jesus simply "rebuked the fever," and a cure was effected, so instantaneous and so complete, that the sufferer at once rose and ministered to the Healer and those with Him. This miracle wrought in Simon's own house, followed as it was by a multitude of others at even, must have deepened the impression of the divine in Jesus, which had already been made so remarkably by the draught of fishes.

**15. HIS INTRUSIVE ZEAL.** These incidents in Capernaum seem to have been followed by a number of events which served to prepare the disciples for the approaching call to the greater responsibilities of apostles. Simon probably accompanied Jesus in various journeys in Galilee and elsewhere, hearing Him preach the gospel of the kingdom, and witnessing such miracles as the cleansing of the leper and the healing of the paralytic, and such events as the call of Matthew (Matt. viii. 2-4; ix. 2-9; Mark i. 30-45; ii. 1-14; Luke v. 12-28). One incident belonging to this period brings Simon forward again in character. After the evening spent in works of healing in Capernaum, Jesus had an opportunity for retirement and prayer. Simon, at the head of others, broke in upon the Master's solitude. It was as if in his precipitate zeal he would reproach Him for quitting a scene where there was much to do and where He was sought by all. Simon spoke like one



who feared that Jesus had thought to leave him. He failed to understand what these secret communings with His Father were to the Son of man, and how far even His day's work depended upon them for its discharge.

16. CALL TO THE APOSTLESHIP (Matt. x. 2-4 ; Mark iii. 13-19 ; Luke vi. 12-19). The next scene in which Simon is specially mentioned also takes place apparently in the vicinity of Capernaum. It is one in which he appears along with others, but with an obvious pre-eminence. The hostility of the ruling classes in Judea to Jesus had now taken pronounced form. The scrupulous legalists had joined hands with the worldly court-party. The Pharisees had taken fierce offence at Christ's teaching on questions like the Sabbath law, and had been in counsel with the Herodians for His destruction. The time had come for the Master to summon around Him a select body of followers who were to be more to Him than disciples. This solemn act was preceded by the consecration of another night to solitary prayer. He chose twelve to whom He gave the name of Apostles, on whom He was to bestow supernatural powers, and who were to be sent out as His special envoys or delegates. Among these Simon holds the first place. Each of the three Synoptists pauses also to mention the new name which he had received, as if from that time he was publicly acknowledged to be what the name implied. He obtains this precedence, neither because he was older than others, nor because he had been the first to enter the ranks of the disciples (in this Andrew and John were both before him), but because He, who knew what was in man, recognized him to be the representative Apostle, and appointed him as such to the foremost position.

#### POINTS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY.

1. *Peter's debt to the Baptist.*

2. *The question as to the modes of reckoning time in the Gospels.*

3. *The division of the night into watches.*

4. *Comparison of Peter's "Depart from me" with the petition of the Gadarenes in Matt. viii. 34.*

5. *The importance of name-givings in the Bible.*

6. *The state of medical practice in New Testament times.*

7. *The great Jewish parties, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, their distinctions, and their hold upon Northern Israel.*

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## CHAPTER III.

### FROM THE CALL TO THE APOSTLESHIP ON TO THE GREAT CONFESSION.

17. A QUESTION AND A LESSON (Luke xii. 22-48). The Call of the Apostles seems to have been followed by the Sermon on the Mount, a great series of parables, a second circuit in Galilee, and a number of events, such as the healing of the Centurion's servant, the raising of the widow's son, the Baptist's delegation, the reception of the woman who was a sinner, the stilling of the tempest, the raising of Jairus' daughter, the occurrence with the Gadarene demoniacs, and others. These would all be helpful in deepening and enlightening Peter's faith as well as that of the rest, and in preparing him and them for the mission on which they were soon to be sent forth alone. During this period Peter seldom obtains separate or prominent mention. In the miracle on Jairus' daughter he shares the same honour as James and John. In one incident, belonging probably to this date, he appears in the characteristic position of spokesman (Luke xii. 35-48). Jesus had

been speaking of the necessity of watchfulness on the part of His disciples. He had conveyed His warnings in figurative terms, using first the image of servants waiting to welcome the master on his return from the wedding, and then that of the goodman of a house and the guardian of his dwelling against the entrance of thieves. Peter's active mind, which had been following the Lord's words intently, was arrested by something which he wished explained to him. It was not that he found a difficulty, as some suppose, with the strange change from the emblem of servants to that of the goodman. That would not stagger Peter; for the people of the East were no doubt accustomed then, as they are still, to the use of the most mixed and dissimilar figures in illustrating the same truth. What was in his mind was rather the honour which Jesus had held out as in store for the watchful servant (Luke xii. 37). He broke in, therefore, with a question (which is reported only by Luke, ch. xii. 41) addressed to Jesus with his usual frank impetuosity. He would know whether the parable, and therefore the distinction of which it spoke, were meant only for the Apostles or were intended for all. It was a question essentially the same in spirit as a subsequent appeal by Peter, of which Matthew (ch. xix. 27) preserves the record. Jesus does not pause to notice the interruption and give a direct reply. He proceeds to describe the faithful servant and the unfaithful, but does this in such a way as to expose the mistake that lay at the root of Peter's question, and to point the truth that in His kingdom the measure of honour bestowed is the measure of service expected. He "makes as if He were continuing His discourse without regard to Peter's enquiry. But in reality He gives to His exhortation to vigilance such a turn that it results in an exact answer to that enquiry. Compare a similar form, ch. xix. 25, 26; John xiv. 22, 23, and elsewhere" (Godet). And the unlordly estimate which



his great epistle proves Peter at last to have taken of himself, shows how he profited by lessons like this. See, *e.g.*, 1 Peter v. 1-3.

18. **THE WALK UPON THE WATER** (Matt. xiv. 22-33 ; cf. Mark vi. 45-56 ; John vi. 15-21). The time came at length when Jesus could send forth His Apostles on their honourable but novel work. It was not until He had made His third circuit in Galilee (Matt. x. 1-42 ; Mark vi. 6-12), and had well prepared them for their vocation, that He carried out the intention which He had expressed when He chose them. They went forth gifted with miraculous powers and fortified by special instructions. They had to go upon their mission of healing and preaching without the Master Himself. But they were sent out considerably two by two, and were not asked to venture on unfamiliar ground among Gentiles or Samaritans. They were to limit themselves to the house of Israel, and to the territories of Judea and Galilee. No special notice is taken of Peter in the record of this event. But we can imagine him to have gone forth with John as his companion. Whom could the Lord more fitly unite as one of the apostolic pairs than these two ? And the finishing of this first mission of the Twelve at once leads to an occurrence in which Peter takes the foremost place. On the return of the Apostles with the report of their work, Jesus, with a watchful regard for their need, brings them privately by ship to a desert place in the neighbourhood of Bethsaida, where they may have retirement (cf. Mark vi. 32 ; Luke ix. 10). This must have been the Bethsaida Julias, the ruins of which are supposed yet to be seen at Telui, at the north-east end of the Lake of Gennesaret, and near which, as recent travellers report, there is found a secluded tract which meets the circumstances of the case. Here Jesus feeds, with the five loaves and the two fishes, the multitude of 5000 people who, in their eagerness to hear, have



travelled round the head of the lake and anticipated even the boat. After this great miracle He constrains the disciples to cross the sea again to the other Bethsaida, or to the neighbourhood of Capernaum (Mark vi. 45 ; John vi. 17), while He Himself seeks a quiet place where He may pray. Darkness sets in. The disciples are distressed by the tossing wave and the contrary wind. From the solitary spot which He has made His oratory for the night, away up on one of the neighbouring hills, He keeps the lake in view. About the fourth watch of the night (Mark vi. 48), or somewhere between 3 A.M. and 6 A.M., when they have been toiling apparently some eight or ten hours, and are yet little more than half across,<sup>a</sup> the beaten mariners discover a figure walking towards them on the sea in the grey and uncertain dawn. Sharing the superstitions of the time, they cry out in terror as if it were a spirit or phantom, perhaps the Spectre of the deep boding shipwreck. The voice of Jesus reassures them, perhaps all the more that they had probably already seen His power over the winds and waves in the miracle of the Stilling of the Tempest. There is one heart, too, in the startled company that leaps up in a singular response to the Master's words. The evangelist Matthew, and he alone of the four, introduces Peter here by name, and relates at length a scene which we should be sorry to miss, the precise point of which, however, is not very easy to catch. Perhaps with some lingering doubt whether this is indeed his Lord, and promptly proposing a test which will bring the matter to a conclusion, perhaps supposing that as he has received power over unclean spirits he may also have power over the elements, perhaps impatient to come at once close to the person of Jesus, as afterwards on the same lake (John xxi. 7), Peter impetuously exclaims, "Lord,

<sup>a</sup> Compare here John's statement of the furlongs rowed with the width of the lake.

if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water." Receiving the Lord's invitation, he steps unhesitatingly over the boat's side, and begins to walk upon the sea. But, as afterwards in the judgment-hall, the confidence which had borne him up bravely for the moment, suddenly fails him at the pinch. Terror rushes in as his attention turns to the boisterous elements. Feeling himself sink he cries out for the Master, and is rescued and rebuked. The courage in which he seemed to excel others is discovered to be open to panic and surprise, because heady and unreflecting. His confidence is seen to be self-confidence. The incident is a severe discipline of his faith, revealing to himself and others the uncertainties in the man who was the Rock among the brethren. The apparent hero of the occasion is reproached for his littleness. The peril which besets the ambition to do great things for which there is no call, and which serve no sufficient end, is at the same time impressed on a mind that eminently needed such a lesson. "It was a useless miracle," says a thoughtful writer, "for which Peter asked; the result was an exhibition not of his strength, but of his weakness. . . . And the lesson appears to me to be, True faith never attempts wonders for the sake of doing them. It relies on God for everything in time of need, but never seeks or manufactures occasions for marvellous experiences or exhibitions of faith."<sup>a</sup>

**19. THE PROFESSION OF FAITH AT CAPERNAUM** (John vi. 66-71). In words spoken in Capernaum, in whole or in part in the synagogue there (John vi. 59), Jesus had warned the people against following Him for the sake of His miracles, or for the loaves which He could provide. He

<sup>a</sup> See Lyman Abbott's *Commentary on Matthew and Mark*, p. 192. He remarks, too, on the way in which the Gospels narrate, without the slightest reserve, and as no unhistorical records would, repeated instances of failure in faith, in understanding Christ, and in miraculous power. See *e.g.*, Matt. xvi. 10, 11, 23; xvii. 16; Mark ix. 16-33.

had described Himself as "the Bread which came down from heaven," and had checked the murmurings of the Jews. He had spoken of giving His flesh for the life of the world, and had affirmed the peculiar relation in which He stood to the Father. His words proved an offence to many, and were received as hard sayings not only by the Jewish leaders and the volatile populace, but even by some of His followers. "From that time," says John, "many of His disciples went backward and walked no more with Him."<sup>a</sup> It was the first serious secession, and it marked a crisis in His mission which Christ Himself profoundly felt. He turned to the Twelve, as He saw others drawing off, and in a pathetic question addressed to them the test which had discovered so much unreality even in disciples. But, as if He knew them too well to believe it possible that they could act in the way which His experience of others might suggest, He gave His question a turn which expected a negative reply. It is as if He had said, "Surely ye also do not purpose to go away, do you?" Such an appeal was certain to go straight to the heart of the warm, devoted Peter, with whom also the impressions of the last scene upon the lake had not yet faded. He answered the question of Jesus by another of his own, which revealed how deep a root his attachment to Christ now had, and how much he was conscious of having found in Him—"Lord, to whom shall we go?" He gave his reason, too, for this. It was what he had seen Christ's words to be. They might stagger and repel others ;

<sup>a</sup> The phrase in John vi. 66, which the Authorised Version renders "from that time," and the Revised Version "upon this," is taken by some of the best interpreters rather in the sense of "on this account." As Meyer points out, the Evangelist has not in view a gradual process of desertion, but rather a positive withdrawal which took place then and at once, and was due to this discourse of Jesus, which "so thoroughly undeceived them as regarded their earthly Messianic hopes."



but to him they brought eternal life.<sup>a</sup> And to this he added a declaration of faith, the remarkable decision and elevation of which must have been a seasonable satisfaction to his Lord. Its exact terms, as the Revised Version and the best ancient authorities put them, were these—"And we have believed, and know that Thou art the Holy One of God." It was given emphatically as the testimony of those who ought to have known the Master best—"we," *i.e.*, "we Apostles." It gave faith its proper place as prior to knowledge and the condition thereof in the spiritual kingdom—"we have believed, and so have come to know." It recognised Christ as "the Holy One of God" (not "the Son of the living God," as the Authorised Version gives it)—an Old Testament title which described Him as the One "who is consecrated of God to be the Messiah through the fulness of the Spirit and salvation vouchsafed Him" (Meyer). It was a testimony which showed how much at least one of the Twelve had learned from what Christ had been teaching and doing, and how his convictions as to His claims had been deepening.

20. THE GREAT CONFESSION AT CAESAREA PHILIPPI (Matt. xvi. 13-20; Mark viii. 27-30; Luke ix. 18-21). Another profession of faith follows, and one of supreme importance as regards Peter. Matthew gives the fullest account of the circumstances, and to him we owe the completest report of the terms of Peter's memorable reply. Mark and Luke narrate the whole more briefly, and

<sup>a</sup> In the expression—"Thou hast the words of eternal life," the phrase "the words (or perhaps simple *words*, without the article) of eternal life" may mean either "words *about* eternal life," or "words *which bring with them* eternal life." Professor Westcott shows that the analogy of similar forms in John's writings (*e.g.*, *the bread of life*, vi. 35; *the light of life*, viii. 12; *the water of life*, Rev. xxi. 6, xxii. 1, 17; *the tree of life*, Rev. ii. 7, xxii. 2, 14) is on the side of the second meaning. He also points out that Peter "does not speak here of the completed gospel ("the word"), but of specific sayings which had been felt to carry life in them. See *Speaker's Commentary*, on John vi. 66.



omit the words of honour addressed by Christ to His follower. It has been affirmed, indeed, that this declaration of faith which appears in the Synoptical Gospels is really identical with the one which we have already found recorded by John. But, while they belong apparently to the same period, a careful comparison shows them to be so different in circumstances, occasion, and object, that they must be regarded as distinct. There is nothing strange in having Christ represented as drawing forth such a profession of faith on more than one occasion, nor can it be said to be in any degree unnatural that the apostle should repeat it. These two confessions, indeed, are separated, according to some of the best of those who have attempted to draw up a harmony of the four Gospels, by various events of deep interest, such as our Lord's justification of His disciples for eating with unwashen hands, the healing of the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, the cure of the deaf and dumb man along with others, the feeding of the 4000, the Pharisees' demand for a sign, the cautions against the leaven of the Pharisees, the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida (Matt. xv. 1—xvi. 12; Mark vii. 1—viii. 26). There is a manifest difference, too, in the point and purpose of the two, the former referring to the "inward character in which the apostles found the assurance of life," while this one is a confession of the "public office and theocratic Person of the Lord."<sup>a</sup> Jesus was now in the neighbourhood of Caesarea Philippi, a town occupying a magnificent site in the far North, under the shadow of Hermon, and near the more easterly of the two waters, which were regarded as the sources of the Jordan. It is thus described by the traveller Robinson (vol. iii. p. 404):—"The situation is unique; combining in an unusual degree the elements of grandeur and beauty.

<sup>a</sup> They are thus distinguished by Westcott. See his Commentary on John vi. 69.

It nestles in its recess at the southern base of the mighty Hermon, which towers in majesty to an elevation of 7000 or 8000 feet above. The abundant waters of the glorious fountain spread over the terrace luxuriant fertility and the graceful interchange of copse, lawn, and waving fields." This Caesarea,<sup>a</sup> which received its name in honour, partly of the emperor and partly of the Tetrarch Philip (the latter having greatly extended and adorned it), is nowhere mentioned in the New Testament, except in Matthew and Mark's narratives of the present incident. Neither has it any place in Old Testament history, unless it can be identified, as some excellent authorities suppose, with Baal-Gad, the spot noted as the northern or north-western limit of Joshua's march of conquest (Josh. xi. 17 ; xii. 7 ; xiii. 5). In many respects it was a place of extraordinary interest, with a history extending far back into heathen times. It was the seat of a famous sanctuary of the great god Pan. There was a fitness, therefore, in selecting for the scene of so decisive an acknowledgment of Christ's claims, a place so remarkably connected with the worship of a deity held in peculiar honour in the later periods of Greek and Roman heathenism. Its ancient name Panium was retained in the form Paneas, under which it was known as the seat of a Christian bishopric in the time of the Crusades. It reappears, too, in the modern Banias, which attracts the notice of all travellers, both for its historical associations, and for the immense fortress which has survived all the changes in the fortunes of the town, and still ranks as the greatest stronghold in the Holy Land.

21. THE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS AT CAESAREA. Here, then, on the borders of the

<sup>a</sup> To be carefully distinguished from the Caesarea of the Book of Acts, which was built by Herod the Great, named after the Emperor Augustus, and known as Caesarea Augusta, Caesarea Palestinae, or Caesarea on the Sea

Gentiles, at the point which marked the northern boundary of His circuits, Jesus took His disciples with Him, away from the busy populace and the thronging hearers, to a secluded place where He might pray (Luke ix. 18), and having them alone, there put to them two solemn questions. Both the questions and the answers are given in brief and general form by Mark and Luke. But Matthew records them more fully and definitely. From him we learn that Jesus asked them first who men said that He, the Son of man, was.<sup>a</sup> He wished to hear what meaning was put by the people generally on the title *Son of Man*, which He had been claiming for Himself, and with which the people were familiar from its use in the Book of Daniel. The answer showed that the people had not understood it to apply to Him in the Messianic sense which it had in Daniel, but that, perplexed as to who He was, some were saying that He might be the Baptist risen, others Elijah returned, others Jeremiah the Prophet, who was then very much in the popular mouth, others still some other prophet unnamed. Turning from these disappointing reports of what others thought of Him, He asked the disciples what they themselves took Him to be. The question was Peter's opportunity. Taking the reply for all into his own mouth he declared that Jesus was *the Christ, the Son of the living God*. The former title showed that, in the general bluntness of popular perception, the Twelve at least recognised Jesus to be what Daniel meant by the name *Son of man*, to wit, the Messiah. The latter showed that, having received Him as the anointed Son of man, they had now been led to see in Him more than even that. For in this connection the title *Son of God*

<sup>a</sup> As the Revised Version indicates, ancient authorities vary, in Matt. xvi. 13, between the form—"Who do men say that the Son of man is?" and the form—"Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?"



appears to be more than a synonym for *Messiah*, and to imply that Peter had come to recognise something of his Master's higher nature and peculiar relation to God. It was a confession which came most fitly from Peter's lips, and one for which Christ had waited long. Not until He had carried His Apostles through a lengthened training, and now saw the crisis hastening which was to be their trial as well as His, did He seek the opportunity to bring it out. Now that He had drawn it from the leader, it was to be in its largeness and decisiveness at once a satisfaction to himself, and to them a confirmation of convictions which would immediately have to bear the strain of all that He had to say about His sufferings and death.

**22. THE GREAT PROMISE TO PETER.** Various confessions of what Jesus was had been made before this one. The Baptist had publicly acknowledged Him as the Lamb of God. The disciples had hailed Him as the Messiah. They that were in the ship in the storm had even worshipped Him as the Son of God (Matt. xiv. 33). But this confession at Cæsarea was something distinct from all that had preceded it. Christ recognised its supreme importance not only by pronouncing the man who made it *blessed*, and addressing him with marked solemnity,<sup>a</sup> but also by signalling it as made only in virtue of a divine revelation. Peter had had something to declare of Him. He had now something to declare of Peter. The disciple had said of Him, "Thou art the Christ." He now said of the disciple, "Thou art Peter." Taking up this name of grace, *Peter*, which had been given previously, and speaking (notice the force of the words, "And I

<sup>a</sup> Jesus calls him on this occasion Simon Bar-Jona (or Bar-Jonah, with the Revised Version), using not only the personal name, but also the patronymic, the form compounded of the term *Bar*, meaning *son*, with the father's name. We have similar patronymics in Bartholomew, Bartimæus, Barnabas, Bar-Jesus, &c.



also say unto thee," verse 18) as if He was to make a solemn declaration on His side corresponding to that just made by His apostle, He intimated how this man was to prove himself worthy of the name, and what He was to be to the Church or whole fellowship of believers. Around this memorable sentence, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church," the fires of controversy have raged for ages. It has been dragged into the great dispute between Protestantism and Popery, and has suffered loss thereby. The difficulty lies in the play of words between the name *Peter* and the term *rock*, which two words in Greek differ from each other only in the one being the masculine and the other the feminine form, and in the former denoting a stone or piece of rock, the latter the rock itself. It is as if Jesus had said, "Thou art *Petros*, by name a Piece of Rock, and upon this Rock, this *Petra*, I will build My Church." It cannot be that by this Jesus meant to point to Himself as the Rock, as if He had said, "Thou art indeed Peter, a stone in the structure, but it is upon Me, the Rock, that the Church must have its foundation." Great names, it is true, are connected with this interpretation. But it is not consistent with the directness with which the other terms are addressed to Peter, particularly the subsequent "I will give unto *thee* the keys," &c. Neither did Jesus mean by the phrase "this rock" merely the *faith* witnessed in the Apostle, the *confession* made by him, or the *truth* to which he gave expression. Not to mention other considerations adverse to this widely-accepted view, it is enough to notice that it is the habit of the New Testament writers to speak of persons, not of truths or sentiments, as the stones, the pillars, or the foundations of the Church (cf. 1 Pet. ii. 4-6; 1 Tim. iii. 15; Gal. ii. 9; Eph. ii. 20; Rev. iii. 12; xxi. 14). It was to Peter himself that Christ pointed, as if He had said, "Thou art *Petros*, which means a Rock; and

as thy name is, so shalt thou be among the brethren --the Petra, the Rock on whose strength the whole community of My disciples shall lean and be built up. As elsewhere the Apostles are described as the foundation where Christ is the chief corner-stone (Eph. ii. 20), so this man was now spoken of as the one among the Twelve on whom Christ, the great Architect or Master-builder, would rear His Church. The words, therefore, assigned to Peter a position of fundamental dignity and importance, a primacy, if men choose so to call it, in the history of the Church. But it was a primacy utterly unlike that asserted in the interests of the Popish claims, one which was not declared to carry any lordship with it, to which no extraordinary jurisdiction was attached, and for which no perpetuity or succession was promised. Nowhere in the New Testament is any exclusive authority either claimed by Peter, or recognised in him by others. In his great epistle he speaks of himself as nothing more than an elder among elders, and repudiates the idea of any lordship over God's heritage (1 Pet. v. 1, 3). There is nothing in history to show that he was ever bishop of Rome, or ever held any official position there, or transmitted anything like episcopal rule to a successor. His primacy was that of the man who had the elements of character fitting him for a leading position, and who had shown by his great confession of Christ that he had the spiritual insight and the steadfastness of faith that marked him out for the first place in the planting of Christ's Church. How this primacy was made good appears from the position which Peter at once took after the Ascension, from the accessions secured for the Church by his preaching at Pentecost, from the firm stand which he made before the Sanhedrim at the crisis which held the life of the infant Church at stake (Acts iv. 8-22), from the part which he played in opening the Church to the Gentiles (Acts xv.), and from many things else in his career.

23. THE POWER OF THE KEYS. The church which Christ was to build upon this rock was to be stable and secure. The gates of Hades (not *hell* in our present use of the word) were not to prevail against it. In other words, it was to be safe against every hostile power, even that of the invisible world or the kingdom of death.<sup>a</sup> Provision was to be made for its due administration when Christ Himself should no longer visibly guide and govern it. A promise was added of a power which was to be put into Peter's hands, described as the possession of "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." With this was to be connected a prerogative of *binding* and *loosing*, which would be recognised in heaven. The language is figurative, and has been subjected to very strange handling in controversial interests. But the figures are familiar enough. Jesus still thinks of the church as a building or house, although He passes from the term "church" to that of "kingdom of heaven."<sup>b</sup> But as regards Peter himself, there is a change from the idea of a *foundation* to that of a *house-steward*. The figure of the *keys* is a somewhat common one, being specially characteristic of the Book of Revelation (cf. i. 18, iii. 7, ix. 1, xx. 1); but also occurring elsewhere, as in Luke xi. 52 and Isaiah xxii. 22, where Eliakim has the power of admitting to or excluding from the house of David. The other terms,

<sup>a</sup> As the gate in eastern cities was the place for public deliberation, the "gates of Hades" may mean the *schemes* of the nether world, or it may be a figure for the *empire* or *sovereignty* of Hades, as we speak of the Turkish empire as "the Sublime Porte." Some of the best interpreters, however, take the point of comparison to be simply that of *strength*. Meyer, *e.g.*, takes the sense to be that strong as the solid gates of Hades may be, they will not be so strong or stable as the Church; when the latter is perfected at Christ's Second Coming, the former will not avail to keep back the Church's departed members from rising to be partakers of Christ's glory. The idea will thus be much the same as in 1 Cor. xv. 26, 54-57.

<sup>b</sup> It is doubtful whether much is intended by this change. Some suppose that the Church becomes the "kingdom of heaven" only at Christ's Second Advent. The phrase "kingdom of heaven" is an expression for the Messianic kingdom, and so for the spiritual kingdom founded and to be perfected by Christ.



*binding* and *loosing*, have been supposed to refer to the power of remitting or retaining sins, and therefore to be analogous to the declaration in John xx. 23. This interpretation, however, although supported by great names, is opposed to two plain facts : first, that the term *sin* is not introduced here ; and second, that while the phrase "*looses sin*" may mean "*forgives sin*," there is no instance of the phrase "*bind sin*" with the sense of retaining sin. Other doubtful meanings have also been put upon these expressions. But they are best understood as figures for *forbidding* and *allowing*. They were used in this sense among the later Jews, as when it was said of the two great Rabbis, Shammai and Hillel, in the debate about the binding obligation of certain points of Jewish law, that the one *bound* and the other *loosed*. The whole statement, therefore, implied the bestowal upon Peter, as the leader among the Apostles, of a power like that held by the steward in a great house—the power of deciding who were to be allowed and who were to be denied, admission into the Church, and of declaring what was to be permitted and what was to be prohibited in it. And this power, exercised in the Holy Ghost, was to have Divine sanction. It was not absolute or arbitrary in its nature, nor was it even limited to Peter. The same prerogative was promised in much the same terms to the others (Matt. xviii. 18). What Christ made over to the representative Apostle in this promise was something more than the commission to preach among all men the Kingdom of God (which is all that some recognise in the words) ; and something vastly less than the absolute rule over the Church, or the prerogative of making grants out of the Church's treasury of grace, which is the Popish gloss upon the sentence. It meant that Peter, in conjunction with the other Apostles, and as taught by the Holy Ghost, was to be to the Church, after the Lord's Ascension, in a secondary and derived sense what the Lord had been to it in a primary



sense before His Ascension. In cases like those of Simon Magus and Ananias and Sapphira, and on occasions like that of the opening of the Church to the Gentiles, we shall find Peter exercising this power in its most distinct and Divinely sustained form.

#### POINTS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY.

1. *The force of the term "living God" in the Old Testament.*
2. *The title "Son of Man"—its use in the New Testament, its roots in the Old Testament.*
3. *The title "Son of God"—its various senses, its Messianic applications.*
4. *The meaning of the phrase "flesh and blood" as explained by the Old Testament.*
5. *Illustrations of the figurative use of the term "gate."*

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## CHAPTER IV.

### FROM THE GREAT CONFESSION TO THE SUPPER.

24. PETER REBUKING AND REBUKED (Matt. xvi. 21-28; Mark viii. 31—ix. 1; Luke ix. 22-27). It might have seemed likely that Jesus would make the great confession at Caesarea an occasion for proclaiming what He was. But the people were not ready for that. The little glimmering that came to them tempted them only to make Jesus king by force. The Apostles themselves had but a dim idea of the truth. So instead of sending them forth to publish to the Jewish world His Messiahship and Divine Sonship, He forbade them (observe the strength of Luke's statement, ix. 21) to say anything of this to any man (Matt. xvi. 20; Mark viii. 30), and surprised them with the announcement of His sorrows. Matthew is careful to state that it was

"from that time forth" that Jesus began to speak plainly to them of His sufferings and death. It was necessary now that they should know the trials which were upon the wing, and they were themselves now better prepared than ever before to receive the intimation. Yet the grossness which still weighted their Messianic expectations at once betrayed itself. The man, who had just given voice to the loftiest convictions of faith yet expressed to Christ, was the man who made this plain. As on other occasions, so now Peter's action showed what obtuseness of spiritual perception clung even to his times of highest attainment and most singular honour. The height to which he had so lately risen revealed more plainly his unreflecting precipitancy. He went to the extreme of rebuking his Master because He spoke of death, and put himself forward as if he would save his Lord from Himself.<sup>a</sup> The Rock had become the stumbling stone. In sterner terms than He ever applied to any other follower, Jesus rebuked His rebuker and repelled the intrusion. For the moment the man who had stood so high was as Satan to One, who saw the biddings of the Tempter in the wilderness, in favour of a short and easy way to kingship, repeat themselves in the Apostle's offence at the thought of suffering in the Messiah, and his desire to make that impossible. It is Mark again that reports all the details of this incident which were least in the Apostle's favour, he alone saying expressly that Jesus "rebuked" Peter, he alone noticing that the rebuke was administered in a way that all should hear it—when Jesus "had turned about and *looked on his disciples.*"<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> "We are reminded of the Frankish chief who, when told of our Lord's sorrows, exclaimed, 'Would that I had been there with my legions.'"—(Green, p. 33.)

<sup>b</sup> Observe the use of the old English word *savour* (Matt. xvi. 23; Mark viii. 33), from the French *savoir* and the Latin *sapere*, with the sense of *thinking* or *mind*ing. Latimer quotes 1 Cor. xiii. 11, thus—"When I was a child I *savoured* as a child." (See Aldis Wright's *Bible Word-Book*.)

25. PETER IN THE TRANSFIGURATION SCENE (Matt. xvii. 1-13; Mark ix. 2-13; Luke ix. 28-36). Another, and still more exceptional scene quickly followed. It was one in which Peter's figure stood out strongly, and which formed a marked stage in the training by which he was led step by step to know Christ and His mission. At Caesarea Philippi Jesus enjoyed a week's repose, the last that was to be His before the hastening sorrows of the end. After this space He took the three privileged Apostles with Him, in the cool, still evening, up to a high mountain, probably one of the more accessible ridges of the snowy Hermon, and was transfigured before them. Amid the mysteries of the occasion,—the light irradiating the Master's person, the entrance, the converse, the vanishing of the great Legislator and the great Prophet, the overshadowing cloud, the voice attesting the Sonship of Jesus and His right to be heard, one of the three witnesses was unable to keep silence. It does not appear what exactly he had in view by his exclamation about the opportuneness of being there, and his proposal to make three tabernacles, as if to detain the visitants and prolong the scene. It may be that his thoughts turned simply to the booths which it was the custom to erect at the Feast of Tabernacles. It may be that the ancient days of Israel rose upon his mind, the times of early privilege when the Lord spake with Moses in the sacred tent (Exod. xxxiii. 7-10), and that these dimly suggested the possibility of establishing similar centres of holy intercourse and worship here. He spoke in bewilderment, under the mingled joy and terror of the scene, and as one startled out of sleep, not knowing what he said. But his words, half incoherent as they were, discovered his inclination to cling to the past; and he was taught here that the past was merged in Christ, and only He could stay. In the scene near Caesarea Philippi he had



taken offence at the mention of his Master's death,<sup>a</sup> and here he found it to be the theme of converse between the great representatives of the Law and the Prophets. Luke, to whom we owe the fullest narrative here, tells us that it was in order to pray that Jesus ascended the mount. What took place there bore upon His own preparation for His Passion. It was His solemn installation, as it has been termed, to that Passion and its issues. But it was addressed also to the spiritual education of the disciples, and especially to the equipment of one of them for the burden he was to bear after his Lord's departure. The glimpse now caught of the majesty of Christ's Person, the foregleam of a glory in Him afterward to be revealed, the command to hear Him, were fitted to give new clearness and certitude to Peter's faith. The whole scene is interpreted to this effect in the Second Epistle which bears his name (chap. i. 15-18).

**26. THE TRIBUTE MONEY** (Matt. xvii. 24-27; cf. Mark ix. 33). Certain events follow, such as the healing of the demoniac, and the renewed announcement of the death and resurrection (Matt. xvii. 14-23; Mark ix. 14-32; Luke ix. 37-45), in which the Evangelists do not particularize Peter. Thereafter we come at once upon another incident exhibiting him in character, which is reported only by Matthew. A certain tax was due, which Peter's quick reply seems to represent Jesus as accustomed to pay, but which had not been paid for the present season. This may have been due to the fact that Jesus and His disciples had left Capernaum before the former Passover, and seem not to have revisited it, but for a Sabbath, till now. The tax in question was the

<sup>a</sup> The word used by Peter, in Luke ix. 31, for "decease," is a very uncommon term, meaning literally *exodus*. It is used again in 2 Pet. i. 15, with the same meaning, and in connection with the same event. It occurs nowhere else in this sense in the New Testament, although it is found once in the literal sense of "departing," Heb. xi. 22.



Temple-tax, or *didrachma*, a contribution, originally voluntary, of half a sacred shekel (from 1s. 4d. to 1s. 6d. of our money) which, on the ground of Exodus xxx. 13, &c., every male Israelite of twenty years of age and upwards was expected to pay for the maintenance of worship, and which appears to to have been levied on the 15th of the month Adar.<sup>a</sup> Jesus and His disciples being again in Capernaum, one of the great centres for tax gatherers, it was natural that application should be made for the contribution. The collectors came to Peter, because he was the recognised leader, or because Jesus was most likely to be found in his house. It is not quite apparent what they intended by the question which they put to him—whether it was meant simply to remind him of the obligation, or expressed some doubt that, among other claims which He had now put forward, Peter's Master might profess Himself exempt even from so sacred a debt as this. Peter at least, with a promptitude which might well expect to be approved, spoke to his Master's loyalty in discharging this religious obligation. It was, nevertheless, only a modified approval that was given him when he went within. Jesus "prevented him," that is, *anticipated* him in his statement of what had occurred, and gave him to understand that in his well meant haste to undertake for Him, something had been forgotten. Pointing to the exemption which kings allowed their children from custom and tribute (the terms now used being those for two kinds of civil tax, the duty on exports and imports, and the poll-tax payable to the Romans), He indicated that, if Peter had realised all that he

<sup>a</sup> The tax is generally supposed to have been half a shekel before the Captivity, and also at a much later date. But it seems from Neh. x. 32, 33, that the sum levied immediately after the return from the Captivity was only one-third of a shekel, the reduction being due perhaps, as Dr Edersheim supposes, to the extreme poverty of the people. See his *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, ii., p. 111, for details about this tax. The Pharisees are said to have succeeded in making it compulsory. Vespasian applied it to the use of the Capitol.

had so recently declared Him to be, he might have claimed for Him, as God's Son, freedom from the Temple-tax. Yet the freedom which was His, He would surrender rather than make it a stumbling-block to others. The people could not yet recognise His Sonship, and He would, therefore, pay this due both for Himself and for Peter. He would pay it, too, in a way bearing witness at once to His poverty and to His Divine power, by bidding His Apostle find the exact sum that was needed (the *stater*, which was equivalent to two half-shekels), in the mouth of the first fish he should hook. Peter was thus reminded that he had yet to learn all that his great confession implied. He received a lesson also in the royal law of liberty—the divine law of foregoing privilege and abnegating right, if by the reverse a brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak (Rom. xv. 21). He was taught to “put no stumbling-block in the way of his fellow-men, even as before he had been taught to put none in his Lord's path” (Reed). We are probably justified in thinking that the impression made upon Peter's mind by this incident, is reflected in the counsels which he gives in his First Epistle on the right use of Christian freedom, and on the Christian's duty in regard to civil ordinances (ch. ii. 13, 17).

27. THE LAW OF FORGIVENESS (Matt. xviii. 21, 35). Peter is not mentioned as having taken any notable part either in the contention which broke out among the disciples at this same time, as to who should be greatest, or in the difficulty started by John about the non-believer who cast out devils in Christ's name (Matt. xviii. 1-5; Mark ix. 33-41; Luke ix. 46-50). These things had led Jesus, however, to speak of the child-like spirit which became His Kingdom, of the nobility of service, and of the way in which the erring were to be dealt with. In connection with this, Peter again came forward. Jesus had commended the duty of trying

to gain an offending brother by private converse with him, and then by putting his fault before him in presence of witnesses, and if that failed, by submitting the case to the Church. The matter somehow was not clear to Peter, and he addressed Jesus with questions about the duty of forgiveness. He would know how far this duty was to be carried. Would it be enough to carry it twice as far as the Rabbis proposed? They spoke of three times as the proper limit, and Jesus had specified three steps which ought to be taken ere an offending brother should be regarded as a "heathen man and a publican." Peter probably took Jesus to have been speaking in terms of the Rabbinical precepts, and would know whether a more liberal limit approved itself to Him—not three times but seven times. Or his thoughts may have been running on familiar sayings of the Old Testament, like the "three transgressions and four" of Amos (ch. i. 3), or the seven times of the Book of Proverbs (ch. xxiv. 16). Forgiveness was to him still a matter of times and numbers. With a frankness and simplicity quite his own, his question expressed how strangely even he had missed the spirit of what Jesus had been saying. To forgive one seven times over seemed to his Jewish prepossessions the utmost extent to which one could undertake to go. The "seventy times seven" (or, as the margin of the Revised Version puts it, *seventy times and seven*) with which Jesus met the question, and the parable which He proceeded to speak, were meant to undeceive Peter, and to teach him that, as on God's side, so on man's, forgiveness was not a thing of measurement and computation. How Peter himself profited by this will appear from the way in which he submitted to be gained by Paul in their great contention (Gal. ii. 11-14), and from his own subsequent exhortations to others (1 Peter iv. 8).

28. THE CRAVING FOR REWARD (Matt. xix. 27-30; Mark x. 28-30; Luke xviii. 28-30). A con-



siderable stretch of the Gospel story now intervenes in which Peter is not specially named. This embraces such miracles as the cleansing of the lepers, the healing of the blind man on the Sabbath, and the raising of Lazarus; such parables as those in Luke x., xv., xvi., xviii.; such incidents as the mission of the seventy, the converse with Martha and Mary, the blessing of little children. At length when we reach the interview between Christ and the rich young ruler, we come upon Peter anew. He is again in the attitude of interrogator of his Lord. The young man had left Jesus rather than resign wealth and gain eternal life. His departure and the solemn comment made upon it by Jesus prompted Peter (in this again the interpreter of thoughts stirring in other minds) to speak of the very different choice he and his fellows in the Apostleship had made, and to ask what reward they were to have for all that they had left. There was unspiritual misconception, if not mercenariness, in the question. Jesus corrected it in kindness rather than rebuke, addressing His reply not to Peter individually, but to all. He spoke of his Apostles as destined to have the honour of sharing His own royal prerogative of judging Israel at His coming, and of all who endured sacrifice for Him as certain to have, even in this life, a return of blessing (although, as Mark significantly adds, *with persecutions*), and eternal life hereafter. The parable which follows in Matt. xx. was designed further to chasten this craving for the reward of sacrifice and service, which had its seat even in the most generous heart among the Apostles. The echoes of what Jesus said on this occasion about the future recompense and "the regeneration" seem to linger in various sections of Peter's discourses and letters (cf. Acts iii. 21; 1 Pet. i. 5; v. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 13).

29. PETER AND THE FIG TREE (Matt. xxi. 18-22; Mark xi. 12-26). The crisis is at hand now for Peter as for Christ. The discipline of the Apostle



deepens as the death of the Master draws near. The discourse induced by Peter's question—"What shall we have?" is followed by the ambitious request of James and John, the progress to Jerusalem, the healing of Bartimeus, the incident with Zaccheus, the parable of the pounds, the anointing at Bethany, the entry into the Holy City, the purgation of the Temple. So far Peter is not particularised. It is supposed indeed by some that he was one of the unnamed two who were sent to Bethphage to procure the colt on which Jesus was to ride into Jerusalem (Matt. xxi. 1; Mark xi. 1; Luke xix. 30), but this is quite uncertain. At least from the Tuesday of Passover week, however, he appears as the subject of the most varied experiences, the recipient of the deepest lessons. As they passed into the city on the morning of that day the disciples saw that the fig-tree which Jesus had cursed the day before, and which apparently had begun to wither forthwith, had "dried up from the roots" (Mark xi. 20). Peter impetuously called the attention of Jesus to the fact—"Master, behold the fig-tree which Thou cursedst is withered away." They were words of amazement at the rapidity and completeness of the blight. Curiosity as to the means mingled, perhaps, with the wonderment at the result. Jesus said nothing to satisfy such feelings, but made Peter's exclamation the occasion of enforcing on him and on all the supreme importance of faith as the instrument of all power in the Kingdom of God. Only Mark names Peter as the speaker. It is only Mark, too, that gives Christ's reply in the form of a direct charge, "have faith in God," and makes it clear that the incident did not take place on the day that witnessed the cursing of the tree.

30. THE QUESTION AS TO THE FATE OF THE TEMPLE (Matt. iv. 1-14; Mark xiii. 1-13; Luke xxi. 5-19). Among other things which occurred on this Tuesday there was one in which Peter's brother

held a characteristic position. The Greeks who came up to the feast, according to John xii. 20-22, had their memorable wish to see Jesus communicated to Him by Andrew (here again acting the part of medium between Christ and others), in conjunction with Philip. On the evening of the same day we find the two brothers in private converse with Jesus. The parables of the two sons, the wicked husbandman, the king's son, the poor widow, had been spoken. The voice from heaven had been heard, and Jesus had finally quitted the Temple (John xii. 28, 36). On the way the disciples, probably recalling what Jesus had said to the Pharisees about the desolation of their house (Matt. xxiii. 38), had called His attention to the strength and magnificence of the building, and had drawn from Him only a more distinct prediction of its absolute overthrow. Their minds full of gloomy and doubtful thoughts, they pursued their way until the Mount of Olives was reached. There in the evening twilight Jesus sat down, and the disciples, with the city and the Temple itself in their eye, unburdened themselves. We can imagine with what perplexity and distress the idea of the destruction of the shrine with which God's covenant presence and Israel's privilege of worship were so sacredly associated, would press upon a mind so utterly Jewish as Peter's. The question put to Jesus about the time and the signs of an event so hard to credit sprang not from mere curiosity, but from keenest personal interest. He met it not, indeed, with a direct reply, but with warnings of deceivers and perils to come, promises of help for them in the Holy Ghost, and assurances of the world-wide proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom. Mark alone names the disciples who came thus to private converse with Jesus. They are the four who were conjoined on the first recognition of the Messiah, and among them Peter is named first.

## POINTS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY.

1. *The transfiguration in its bearing on the training of the Apostles.*
  2. *The different kinds of tribute money.*
  3. *Jewish ideas on the subject of the forgiveness of injuries.*
  4. *The Old Testament doctrine of Divine rewards and punishments.*
  5. *The cursing of the barren fig-tree—its meaning to the Apostles, its analogies to others of Christ's deeds.*
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## CHAPTER V.

## FROM THE SUPPER TO THE ASCENSION.

31. THE PREPARATION FOR THE PASSOVER (Matt. xxiv. 17-19; Mark xiv. 12-16; Luke xxii. 7-13). Peter is not named in connection with the Wednesday, the fourth day in Passion Week. But when we reach the Thursday, the day of unleavened bread, we come upon a series of incidents of the most solemn interest, in which he is a foremost figure. The first of these is the preparation for the Passover.<sup>a</sup> As was the case with all Jews at such a time, the thoughts of the disciples turned to the great Festival. Anxious to see all in readiness for it, they came to Jesus Himself for instructions. He gave directions which indicated how He foreknew and had pre-arranged all, but which also had an affecting personal interest. "Evidently neither the house where the Passover was to be kept, nor its owner was to be named within hearing of Judas. That last meal, with its institution of the Holy Supper,

<sup>a</sup> We cannot enter here into the question whether this Paschal Supper was held on the usual day or not.



was not to be interrupted, nor their last retreat betrayed, till all had been said and done, even to the last prayer of agony in Gethsemane."<sup>a</sup> From Mark we learn that Jesus selected two of His disciples to go into the city and announce His need of a room to a man whom they should meet bearing a pitcher of water. Luke informs us that the two were Peter and John. These two, in whom the reflective nature of the one was the complement of the prompt activity of the other, and who were to be so much to each other hereafter, were now for the first time formally united in service by the Lord Himself.<sup>b</sup>

32. PETER AND THE FEET-WASHING (John xiii. 1-20 ; cf. Luke xxii. 24-30). At the Supper which He had been helpful in preparing, Peter is seen in unmistakeable character, drawing all eyes upon himself, full of reverence for Jesus, but slow to grasp the meaning of His acts and words, and leaping from one exaggerated protestation to another at the opposite extreme as he is swayed by the intense feelings of the moment. It is John that furnishes us with all the picturesque details. His narrative bears all the traces of vivid personal recollection. "The portraiture of St Peter is instinct with life ; he acts and is acted upon" (Westcott). The meal, which was to have so peculiar a place in the memory of Christ's Church, begins miserably with a strife among the brethren. Painful importance seems to have been attached, especially by the Pharisees, to the seating of the guests in strict accordance with their social claims. It may have been a contention of this kind that broke out among the disciples. Its keenness would be all the greater if, as there is some reason to suppose, Judas had secured a place of honour near Jesus Himself at the table. When all are seated Jesus brings home to them the unseemli-

<sup>a</sup> See Edersheim's *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, ii. p. 482.

<sup>b</sup> It is supposed by some that the person to whom the two Apostles were guided was the father of John Mark.



ness of the strife for precedence by a discourse in which He again explains how the measure of greatness in His kingdom is the measure of service and humility (Luke xxii. 25, 26), and by an act which reads the same lesson in a form exciting deepest wonder in Peter. The ceremonial of hand-washing took place twice during the ordinary Paschal Supper; first, on the part of the master of the feast alone, when He had taken the first cup and had spoken over it the words of thanksgiving; and secondly, on the part of the company as a whole when the service was much farther on. At the former of these two stages <sup>a</sup> Jesus rises and girds Himself with a towel, but instead of observing the usual ceremonial of hand-washing, proceeds to wash the disciples' feet. The first that He approaches is probably Peter himself. It is difficult to believe that the act, if performed on others before him, would not have drawn from him some other exclamation; and it is not unreasonable to suppose that a sudden revulsion of feeling had led him to seek the lowest place of all, and so to seat himself in the position opposite Jesus and John, where it would be natural for the Master to begin. He shrinks in utmost astonishment from what Jesus is about to do, not perceiving the moral lesson of which it is a parable in action. Jesus declares that, though he fails at present to catch the real meaning of the act, it will become clear to him hereafter. Peter only protests that the "hereafter" can make no difference in this matter—that, as long as the world lasts, he will never let this thing be done to him, which is infinitely too much for him. His hasty, self-confident disclaimer is met by the solemn intimation that unless Christ so washes him

<sup>a</sup> Some suppose that the ceremony in view took place earlier still, being the feet-washing, which it was the host's duty to provide for before the guests went to table. But John's words in ch. xiii. 2 (which are rightly rendered "during supper" by the Revised Version, not "supper being ended," as in the Authorised), are inconsistent with this.

he has no part in Him—that is to say, that unless he will yield himself to Him even in things which he understands not he can have no claim to be His disciple, no place in the Kingdom in which the first law is self-surrender to the King. Smitten with the instant fear of loss, yet failing to read the half of his Master's meaning, now he will not only yield but will have greatly more than Jesus offered—the washing not of feet alone but also of hands and head. In words borrowed from familiar Jewish practices Jesus corrects the error into which the Apostle's impetuosity hurries him on the other side, and gives him to understand that as the man who has once bathed his whole body in preparation for feast or ceremony needs nothing more than to remove incidental stains by washing the part, so he who is once made Christ's by the complete surrender of self which makes his life new, needs henceforth but to continue to yield himself to Christ in the demands which each day brings for submission, service, and humility.<sup>a</sup> In all that he said and did on this occasion, Peter was eminently true to himself. We are not told how far he grasped the sense of those mystic sayings of his Lord at the time. We find him afterwards a counsellor of the humility which was taught himself now. See 1 Pet. v. 5, where he selects an uncommon verb, “be clothed,” or “*gird* yourselves,” which many suppose to embody the idea of meek submission to a slave's service.

### 33. THE REQUEST ADDRESSED BY PETER TO JOHN (John xiii. 21-26 ; cf. Matt. xxvi. 21-25,

<sup>a</sup> “The action,” says Edersheim, ii. p. 500, “was symbolic, and meant that the disciple, who was already bathed and made clean in heart and spirit, required only this—to wash his feet in spiritual consecration to the service of love which Christ had here shown forth in symbolic act. And so His words referred not, as is so often supposed, to the forgiveness of our daily sins—the introduction of which would have been wholly abrupt and unconnected with the context—but, in contrast to all self-seeking, to the daily consecration of our life to the service of love after the example of Christ.” Westcott takes much the same view.

Mark xiv. 18-21, Luke xxii. 21-23). We find Peter next in anxious converse with John at the same table. Jesus spoke of a traitor in the company. The thought that one of themselves should betray Jesus struck the disciples dumb with amazement for the moment. As they "looked one on another" in silent bewilderment, Peter caught John's attention, and said to him, "Tell us who it is of whom He speaketh." For so the words are rightly given by the Revised Version, instead of the less direct form adopted by the Authorised. He imagined that John, lying on Jesus' breast, had got the name of the traitor in a whisper which others could not hear, and he would have the confidant communicate to others the information which would remove their painful perplexity. We can suppose at least two positions which would have made this interchange possible. The place occupied by the head of the company seems to have been the central of the three places nearest the one end of the table. If Jesus, therefore, occupied this seat, and had on His left hand John (whose head then would recline on Jesus' breast), and on His right hand Peter, all would be clear. Or, as already hinted, Peter may have taken the seat at the opposite end of the table (the places next Christ being occupied, as some think, by John and Judas), and have beckoned across to John. The Lord's ready response to the appeal made by John on Peter's behalf shows that the request of the latter was not due, as some have strangely thought, to mere curiosity, far less to his being afraid to ask for himself, but sprang out of his belief that Jesus had already told the secret to John, and his anxiety that all should have the relief which one had obtained from torturing suspense.

34. PETER FORE-WARNED (Matt. xxvi. 31-35 ; Mark xiv. 27-31 ; Luke xxii. 31-38 ; John xiii. 36-38). If the Lord's act or an indication from John relieved Peter from the nameless terror, if he



ever entertained such terror, of being the possible traitor, he was speedily met by an announcement scarcely less painful or incredible, and directed unmistakably to himself. The four gospels each report the Lord's prediction of Peter's fall, and it is difficult to determine the exact relation in which these several accounts stand to each other. It has been a question whether all the four deal with one and the same occasion, whether Matthew and Mark have one incident in view and Luke and John another, or whether John reports one instance, Luke a second, and Matthew and Mark a third. There would be a fitness in Peter's receiving three distinct warnings, as he was suffered to make three distinct denials, and was at last restored by a thrice-repeated question and a thrice-repeated commission. There is some reason to believe that he was the object of at least a two-fold warning. For Luke and John seem to give Christ's words as spoken while the company was still in the upper room, whereas Matthew and Mark appear to give them as spoken when Jesus was now on the way to Gethsemane. There is nothing strange in the repetition of so grave an intimation twice or even thrice to one who held such a position among the brethren. That recorded by John has the appearance of being the first. Jesus had spoken of going where His disciples could not come, and of love as their duty and their strength in the trial of separation. Peter, too impatient, or too bewildered by what had already happened, to pause and think out the Master's meaning, bluntly asks Him whither He was going. Jesus gives a second time, in the same mystic terms, but more fully, the statement which provoked the question. As if it touched his honour, Peter will not hear of his inability to follow Christ now. He protests his readiness to lay down his life at any time for Christ, but only to find his protestation taken up sadly by Jesus in his own words, and met by the startling



declaration that before cock-crow he would deny his Master thrice (John xiii. 36-38). In the same connection, and perhaps at the same point, he hears the words which are recorded only by Luke (chap. xxii. 31), in which Jesus, addressing him pointedly and twice over by the old name Simon, tells him of Satan's desire to have all the disciples, of His own prayer in behalf of himself in particular that his faith may not fail, and of what he intended him to be after the crisis was over to the brethren. <sup>a</sup> Those words, speaking as they do of danger and loss, though also of recovery and of a great mission in the future, draw from Peter nothing but a renewed declaration of readiness to go with his Master, even to prison or death. Jesus, calling him now by the name (Luke xxii. 34) which expressed what he was meant to be among the brethren (the only occasion, as far as the Gospels show, in which He does so use the name), repeats His anticipation of the speedy and miserable failure of all this self-confidence. In the supper-room He had spoken of one among the disciples as His betrayer. When they now quit the chamber, and take their way across the Kedron, heavy with doubtful and boding thoughts, He speaks not of one but of all as certain to be offended. Peter cannot brook the idea. For himself at least, thoughtlessly no doubt, but in simple sincerity, he repudiates it (Matt. xxvi. 33 ; Mark xiv. 29). The lofty assertion shows how little he has learned by what was said at the table, and how like he is to others in discovering least danger from sins which lie nearest us. He is answered by another pointed prediction of the impending denials.

<sup>a</sup> Notice the change from the plural (the Revised Version is followed), "Satan asked to have *you*, that he might sift *you* as wheat," to the singular, "I made supplication for *thee*, that *thy* faith fail not"; the past tense, "*made* supplication," is very significant. Satan is not quicker with his asking than is Christ with His supplication. The temptation is not conceived before provision is made against it by Christ.

But the ardent, impulsive nature, so strong on the side of affection, so weak on that of unreflective haste, is not yet schooled to distrust itself or calculate possibilities. The conversation, which has broken in so solemnly upon the stillness of their anxious march, closes with words from Peter still more unmeasured, if that were possible, in their self-assurance; and his fellow-disciples, caught by the heat of his boastfulness, all take up the same protestation. Hastening events soon showed how blind Peter had been to his Lord's meaning at the time. He had been singled out for special warning, and had been made the subject of special intercession, because underneath the finer elements of his character there was that in him which exposed him to peculiar peril.<sup>a</sup> His later history shows how the lessons, which were not accepted at the time, rose afterwards upon his memory, making him a new man, finally beaten out of self. The impression made upon his mind by Christ's words about Satan's desire is reflected in the strength and directness of the terms in which he speaks of a personal spirit of evil (cf. 1 Pet. v. 8, 9). The charge which he received from Christ to "strengthen" the brethren became the key-note of his subsequent career. Its echoes

<sup>a</sup> The Gospels, it is held by some, show that, however different in their ultimate careers, there was a singular likeness in certain important elements of nature between Peter and Judas, depth of affection and the capacity of faith saving the former from being altogether such an one as the latter. Edersheim, *e.g.*, remarks as follows upon the two:—"Judas, who loved not Jesus at all, had already fallen; Peter, who loved Him—perhaps not most intensely, but, if the expression be allowed, most extensively—stood next to Judas in danger. In truth, though most widely apart in their directions, the springs of their inner life rose in close proximity. There was the same readiness to kindle into enthusiasm, the same desire to have public opinion with him, the same shrinking from the cross, the same moral inability or unwillingness to stand alone, in the one as in the other. Peter had abundant courage to sally out, but not to stand out. Viewed in its primal elements (not in its development), Peter's character was, among the disciples, the likeliest to that of Judas. If this shows what Judas might have become, it also explains how Peter was most in danger that night." (Vol. ii. p. 534-5).

are heard in his writings (1 Pet. v. 10). The fidelity with which he fulfilled it is seen in the Book of Acts.

35. PETER IN THE GARDEN (Matt. xxvi. 36-46; Mark xiv. 32-42; cf. Luke xxii. 39-46). Their march under the melancholy moon in the deep silence of the late evening brings them soon to Gethsemane, the garden of the "oil-press" at the foot of the hill. Here Jesus leaves all but the former witnesses of His power in the raising of Jairus' daughter and of His glory in the Transfiguration. Taking with Him those favoured three (of whom Peter is named first by both Matthew and Mark), He enters the dark privacy of the grove and wrestles with His agony. In the mysterious fluctuations of feeling with which He is tossed, He withdraws from the companionship even of the three and passes alone into the still deeper shadow of the olives, but only to come back and seek again and yet again the solace of their sympathy and watchfulness. Thrice He parts from them, and thrice He returns. While He prays and struggles "with strong crying and tears" (Heb. v. 7), they slumber. As once the glories of the Mount, so now the sorrows of the Garden make them heavy with sleep. Peter and his comrades apprehend something, but only something, of that awful conflict, the intense pressure of which the Evangelists describe in terms so suggestively varied. They see the first rising of the flood upon His sinless soul. In their drowsiness they vaguely hear some of the words which fall from Him. It is perhaps Peter's quicker hearing and livelier memory that are reflected in the fuller narrative of Mark, and in the report of the "*Abba, Father*" as the precise term of invocation. It is Peter, however, that is singled out, according to both Matthew and Mark, as the special object of those sorrowful and surprised remonstrances which break from the lips of Jesus when He finds the three forgetful of His



charge and unable to watch with Him. The Evangelist whose Gospel bears most the impress of Peter's recollections, gives us the most vivid idea of the startling directness with which Jesus addressed Himself to this Apostle. It is the same Evangelist who adds the significant fact that Jesus called upon him by the old name *Simon* (Mark xiv. 37). From this man, if from any, the Master might have expected constancy, watchfulness, and support for Himself and for the brethren. The old nature had been too much for the new responsibility. The Rock had again proved less than steadfast. Yet it was gathering the forces for future strength and stability from shakings such as these.

36. THE SWORD (Matt. xxvi. 48-54; Mark xiv. 44-47; Luke xxii. 47-51; John xviii. 10, 11). The lack of self-control which yielded to faithless sleep in solitude, became heady violence in presence of the threatening multitude. When the armed band broke in and laid hands on Jesus, there was one at least prepared to meet force by force and sell his own life, if need were, for the Master's. The Synoptists leave the man unnamed. It is John who states explicitly what it would have been easy to guess,—that Peter was that one. The men of Northern Israel were in the habit of carrying short swords hidden under their robes. There were at least two swords in the possession of those who went with Jesus from the supper-room to Gethsemane (Luke xxii. 38). One of these seems to have been Peter's, and it was too much for him not to use it now that he was thoroughly awake, and had his Master's danger confronting him. Seized perhaps with the sudden impulse to vindicate the courage which his slumbers had belied, or acting in simple thoughtlessness on the spur of the moment, he dealt a blow which smote off the ear of a bystander occupying a position of some prominence in the band, a servant of the high priest, whose name, Malchus,

we owe to John. It was the only blood shed in defence of Christ. Others had thought of the same defence, and had put the question—"Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" (Luke xxii. 49). Peter had acted without pausing for the answer. He must have received with surprise the rebuke which his bold deed drew from Jesus, both in word and in the instant healing of the wounded ear. There was much in what his Lord said that even Peter could not understand. But a brief space before, during this same eventful night, He had declared that the man who had no sword should "sell his garment and buy one" (Luke xxii. 36). He now bade the sword be sheathed again, because they who took the sword should perish by it (Matt. xxvi. 52). His former teaching on the subject of His kingdom as not one of this world, was not as yet clear to Peter. It would require more than all he yet had passed through to make it plain to him that the weapons of his warfare were not carnal but spiritual (2 Cor. x. 4). Now he and the rest forsook the Master for whom there was no defence, even by the sword.

37. THE DENIALS (Matt. xxvi. 57-58, 69-75; Mark xiv. 53-54, 66-72; Luke xxii. 54-62; John xviii. 13-18, 25-27). All had fled from Jesus. But it appears that at least some had not fled far or long. Besides the young man who is stated by Mark (ch. xiv. 51, 52) to have followed Jesus until he was laid hold of and had to escape naked (who is supposed by many to have been Mark himself), two of those who were with Jesus seem to have speedily regained their courage. Peter is represented by all the Evangelists as having followed Jesus afar off, and we may, perhaps, infer from the several notices in the Gospels that he was the first to rally. The fourth Evangelist mentions another disciple, who is easily identified with John himself, as having done the same. The two enter the high priest's palace, John in virtue of being known to the high priest,

Peter in virtue of John's interest. It is not easy to harmonise the four reports of the trial and discomfiture to which Peter was subjected there. The details are so various that some have gone the length of affirming that there were six denials. These discrepancies make it difficult, but by no means impossible, to construct a consistent narrative. They have their own value, too, as witnesses to the naturalness and honesty of the reports. Here, as he moves restlessly about, now in the glare of the fire kindled in the centre of the court against the sharp spring air, again in the shadow of the porch, now mingling with the crowd of retainers and servants who were standing about and talking over the events of the morning, again retreating to escape observation, Peter is thrice put to the test, and thrice discovers how easily the sudden courage which has carried him so far can fail him at the pinch. First the maid who kept the door charges him, in questioning rather than positive form (John xviii. 17), with being one of the disciples of Jesus, and he is betrayed into a prompt denial of the fact. A second time, after an interval which we cannot measure, he is met by a similar charge, repeated by another maid, and taken up apparently by several. He repels it more loudly, and even with an oath. A third time, after the space of an hour (Luke xxii. 59), during which much has happened, he has to face the same impeachment enforced now by appeal to his Galilean speech, and by the testimony of a kinsman of Malchus. Now, beyond all self-control, he answers the stronger assertion with a stronger denial, mingled with oaths and curses. The cock crowing, already heard once unheeded, is heard the second time, and wakes up the memory of Christ's fore-warning. The startled Apostle looks up to what is passing at the other end of the court. He catches the eye of Him whom he has so miserably denied fixed on him in sorrowful, loving reproach, and he rushes



out a broken, beaten man, to weep tears of godly penitence in solitude. We judge him too harshly, perhaps, when we say that he had no call to penetrate into the high priest's court, and entangle himself in risks so great. It would have been a poor love that, in such circumstances, could have paused to calculate possibilities.<sup>a</sup> Who can tell the thoughts that divided his mind and prompted his denials—thoughts of bewilderment and fear, doubtful thoughts of the effect of a confession of Christ in such circumstances, or of the use of identifying himself further with a ruined cause? But the denials themselves were of the gravest guilt, rising in boldness and in aggravating circumstance one after the other, unrelieved by any such apology as might have been found had the charges been all flung out with a rapidity which made reflection impossible. They showed, as nothing else could, how little he knew himself. They were to be the painful means of making him a stronger, because a less self-reliant, disciple, and of arming him against similar failures in the future.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> "To have fled to his home and shut the door behind him, by way of rendering it impossible to deny that he knew Christ, would not have been Peter, nor any true disciple. Nay, it would itself have been a worse and more cowardly denial than that of which he was actually guilty."—*Edersheim*, ii., p. 550.

<sup>b</sup> The fall of Peter and the look of Jesus are nobly interpreted in Mrs Browning's three sonnets, entitled *The Two Sayings, The Look, The Meaning of the Look*. We transcribe the first of the three:—

"Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat  
Like pulses in the Church's brow and breast  
And by them we find rest in our unrest,  
And, heart-deep in salt tears, do yet entreat  
God's fellowship as if on heavenly seat.  
The first is JESUS WEPT,—whereon is prest  
Full many a sobbing face that drops its best  
And sweetest waters on the record sweet;  
And one is where the Christ, denied and scorned,  
LOOKED UPON PETER. Oh, to render plain,  
By help of having loved a little and mourned,  
That look of sovran love and sovran pain  
Which He, who could not sin yet suffered, turned  
On him who could reject but not sustain!"

38. FROM THE DENIALS TO THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT (Luke xxiv. 9-12; John xx. 1-10; 1 Cor. xv. 5). The Evangelists tell us nothing of how it fared with Peter immediately after the dismal hour, when

“ — he went out speechless from the face of all,  
And filled the silence, weeping bitterly.”

We are left to imagine how he bore the burden of his surpassing faithlessness, what relief he found in the recollection of Christ's look, what reception he had with the brethren. We know not whether he was among those who looked upon the awful tragedy of the Crucifixion. John is mentioned as standing by the cross with Mary and others (John xix. 25, 26), but Peter is not named in that connection. It is not unlikely, however, that he found refuge in the house of John, and could mingle his tears there with those of the beloved disciple and those of the soul-pierced mother. We find him, in any case, in John's company early on the resurrection morning, hurrying with him to the tomb on receiving Mary Magdalene's tidings, and returning with him after its inspection. Instinct bore Mary at once to these two with her story of the stone taken away. And the action of each is characteristic—John outrunning Peter, but pausing outside the sepulchre; Peter entering at once without a moment's hesitation, and emboldening John to follow (John xx. 1-10). It is not easy to gather from the Evangelists the exact impression produced on Peter when he found the tomb empty, and the “linen clothes laid by themselves.” Luke speaks of him as departing, “wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.” The fourth Gospel says of John that he “saw and believed.” But it does not make the same statement of Peter, and leaves even the sense of the term “believed” somewhat uncertain, by what it adds about the two not knowing the Scripture prophecies of Christ's resurrection. From this point, however, the erring

apostle is followed by the most touching tokens of his Master's mindful, solicitous interest in him. From the opened tomb itself a word of comfort is spoken to him in the angelic message entrusted to the women, in which a distinct place is given to one of the band—"Go your way, tell His disciples and *Peter* that He goeth before you into Galilee" (Mark xvi. 7). From Luke and Paul (Luke xxiv. 34; 1 Cor. xv. 5) we gather that Jesus appeared specially to Simon, bestowing on him the honour of being the first of the apostles to whom the risen Lord revealed Himself; and we cannot doubt that when they so met it was in reconciliation. He was present doubtless also with the other apostles on those two occasions when Jesus mysteriously presented Himself among them (Matt. xvi. 14-18; Luke xxiv. 36-49; John xx. 19-29; 1 Cor. xv. 5).

39. THE PUBLIC RESTORATION (John xxi. 1-19). Much had thus been done to remove the shadow under which Peter moved. But something was wanting still. If there had been a reconciliation between the forgiving Lord and the broken disciple, it had been in private. There were obvious reasons, however, why his restoration should be made openly and publicly, as he had been openly forewarned, and had been suffered openly to fall. This was met by the interview which is described, with all the minute and graphic touches indicating the quick and living recollection of a profoundly impressed spectator, in the closing chapter of the Fourth Gospel. The brethren are again in Galilee, and at their old occupation. Led by Peter, so many of them have gone a-fishing, and have had an unsuccessful night. In the early morning, as they look to the shore, preparing to return with their empty boat, they suddenly catch sight of a solitary figure standing out in the grey light upon the beach. A call is heard from the shore, but they fail to recognise the figure. A second time the voice sounds across the water, in



the tone of one familiar with the lake and the trade, giving instructions for another cast. The counsel is adopted ; the mighty haul is taken ; thoughts of a former night's fishing, tenderly associated with the presence of Jesus, stir within them ; and the truth flashes upon them. The eagle-eye of John is the first to recognise the Lord. But Peter is the first to act. Hastily throwing his coat around him, which had been laid aside for purposes of toil, he plunges at once into the sea, the boat's motion being all too slow for the impetuous longings of his affection. Soon all come to land, and Peter, still restlessly active, draws in the net. After they have eaten of the early morning meal ("breakfasted," as it should be, rather than "dined") strangely provided for them, and are gathered about the fire mysteriously kindled on the beach, Jesus suddenly turns upon the man who has been so prompt to give proof of his fearless, self-forgotten devotion, and in the hearing of all puts to him the startling question about his love for Him. Such a question, coming in such circumstances, and after previous reconciliation, must have fallen upon Peter with painful surprise, and everything in the narrative seems so put as to convey the impression not only that the Apostle was grieved, but that it was the intention of Jesus that he should be grieved. The threefold repetition of the question would sorrowfully recall the triple denial. The words "more than these" would remind Peter of his protestation that though all should be offended he would never be offended in Jesus. The pointed address—"Simon, son of John," would sadly bring up the memory of the hour, when, by the same lake, Jesus gave him a new name, and called him to be a fisher of men. And besides all this there is a significant change in the Lord's question, not to be gathered from the English version, which has its own painful meaning. In all three replies Peter uses one and the same word for love,—one expressing a simple

fond, familiar affection. The time is past when he can think of claiming any superiority over others in devotion to Jesus. All that he ventures to affirm now is that, spite of the miserable past which seems to belie it, his love survives, and of this he is so conscious that he dares appeal to Christ's own knowledge of all things in proof of it. In His first two questions Jesus uses a different term for love, one expressing the love tempered with reverence, which rests upon a due recognition of the dignity of its object. But in his third question He adopts Peter's own term, and thus seems to doubt whether the apostle has even that fond, personal affection which he has declared, not to speak of the higher order of love which a proper knowledge of what He is should prompt. It is this,—not simply the repetition of the question for the third time, but the apparent doubt cast by the change of terms upon the profession already made twice, that grieves Peter. Yet it is not the intention of Jesus to question the honesty of Peter's declarations. The commission which He gives him shows that he accepts them as genuine, and that He means to restore him openly and completely in the sight of all. But in so restoring him He recalls the bitter, humbling past,—lest this signal act of honour should become a fresh stumbling-block in his way, reviving the perilous ambition to be foremost, or tempting him to think too lightly of the faithlessness which is so frankly forgiven. Peter's replies show that he has unlearned so far the self-confidence which misled him in the past. The discipline to which he is subjected now is needed to drive him finally out of self. The interview is the open recognition, needful at once for Peter's own comfort and for the good understanding of the brethren, of a reconciliation already effected in private. The charges to feed the lambs and the sheep are the seal of the completeness of the restoration. They are given in varied terms, embracing both the young and the

mature in the flock, both the function of feeding or edifying and that of tending or ruling.<sup>a</sup> They are followed by the announcement, couched in figurative terms, that the martyr's crown is to be his. All is so put as to make it clear to Peter and to the rest, that, in spite of his dismal fall, this Apostle is still to be the Rock among the brethren ; that he is to be nothing less to Christ and to the Church than he might have been had he never fallen.

40. PETER'S ENQUIRY ABOUT JOHN (John xxi. 20-22). Ere the group parts from the sacred scene by the lake, Peter once more appears in character. When Jesus has spoken the words which bear that the old terms of confidence, the old responsibilities and honours, are completely given back to Peter, He adds the brief command, "Follow me." The charge had been given to others before (Matt. viii. 22 ; ix. 9 ; xix. 21 ; John i. 43). It is given to Peter now with a new fulness of meaning, in immediate connection with the announcement of the death by which he shall yet glorify God, and perhaps in a way intimating that only now is he able to do what formerly he had desired to do, but was pronounced unfit for (John xiii. 36, 37). Peter seems, however, to take the charge literally. Turning round as he quits the group, his eye falls on John also following. The sight prompts a question, the broken terms of which show the rush of feeling which brings it instantly to the lips, and which runs literally thus—"Lord, and this man, what?" Something of the old Simon comes out in the enquiry. Natural interest, concern about the course of one who is more than a brother to him, may express itself in the question. But there is something more—the curiosity, the impatience of the old nature, still requiring chastening. The craving to read the future is re-

<sup>a</sup> The charge on the first occasion and on the third is "feed." On the second it is "tend" or "shepherd," as in 1 Pet. v. 2, Acts xx. 28, Matt. ii. 6.



buked. The question which diverts attention from present duty is quickly checked, and the restored apostle's thoughts brought promptly back to the immediate call to follow his Risen Lord.<sup>a</sup>

#### POINTS FOR FURTHER ENQUIRY.

1. *The Passover—its origin, its design, the method of its celebration in Christ's time.*

2. *The probable arrangement of the apostles at the Last Supper.*

3. *The Jewish purifications.*

4. *The apparent discrepancies in the narratives of Peter's denials, and the modes of harmonising them.*

5. *The correspondence of the incidents of Peter's fall with the terms of Christ's forewarning.*

6. *The points of similarity and dissimilarity between the two miraculous draughts on the Sea of Galilee.*

## CHAPTER VI.

### FROM CHRIST'S ASCENSION TO THE ADMISSION OF CORNELIUS.

41. THE VACANCY IN THE APOSTOLATE (Acts i. 15-26). The Gospels tell us nothing of Peter's history during the interval between the scene by the Lake and the Ascension. Neither do the notices which we have elsewhere of events during the forty days introduce him by name. We may imagine him as with the other apostles when the

<sup>a</sup> Keble has expressed part of the meaning of this scene in his poem for St John's day. We give the opening stanza :—

“ Lord, and what shall this man do? ”

Ask'st thou, Christian, for thy friend?

If his love for Christ be true,

Christ hath told thee of his end:

This is he whom God approves,

This is he whom Jesus loves.”

Risen Lord met them on the mountain appointed in Galilee, and when they received the great commission to go and teach all nations (Matt. xxviii. 16-20); as probably with the 500 brethren to whom He manifested Himself in Galilee (1 Cor. xv. 8); and again as with his fellow apostles when the cloud received the ascending Redeemer out of their sight (Mark xvi. 19-20; Luke xxiv. 50-53; Acts i. 9-12). When he is first introduced in the Book of Acts he occupies the foremost place. His name is mentioned first in the enumeration of the little company of believers who met in Jerusalem in prayerful waiting for the fulfilment of the promise of the descent of power upon them from on high. He is coupled immediately with John in that list, as the Revised Version and the best authorities give it (Acts i. 13). He comes forward naturally as actor and leader, and is as naturally accepted as such. On one of those occasions when the Apostles, and Mary (whose last appearance in the sacred history is in this connection), and the women, and the brethren or cousins of Jesus (at length believers in Him, made such probably by His Resurrection and His appearances during the forty days), and the other disciples are gathered together in the upper room for fellowship and prayer, Peter proposes that the vacancy created by the apostacy of Judas should be filled up. The proposal is acceded to in a way which shows how easily he takes up again the functions which seemed to have gone from him for ever on his fall, and how complete is the recognition which his Lord's open act of restoration has secured for him among the brethren. The election is gone calmly about with prayer for Divine direction, and the choice falls on Matthias. The address which Peter delivers on this occasion is memorable in various respects. It contains a clear definition of the requisites in an apostle. It gives accounts of the death of Judas and the purchase of the field of blood, which seem

at first sight strangely at variance with those in the Gospels, but are not incapable of reconciliation therewith. It exhibits the use of the Old Testament, which we shall find to be characteristic of Peter. He appeals to the Scriptures in proof that the counsel of God was seen in the fall of Judas. He finds in that event, and its attendant circumstances, fulfilments of words spoken in more than one of the Psalms (xli. 9, lxix. 25, cix. 8), with reference to the enemies of the godly, and the familiar friend lifting up his heel against the righteous. The incident is also remarkable for giving the only New Testament instance of an appeal to the lot. In the Old Testament we find the lot used in a variety of connections (cf. Levit. xvi. 8 ; Num. xxvi. 52 ; 1 Chr. xxiv. 5, xxv. 8 ; Prov. xvi. 33, xviii. 18, &c.). Neither in the appointment of deacons, nor in any case of election or decision subsequent to Pentecost, is the lot employed. It is adopted on this critical occasion surely not as Peter's own fond idea, as some have strangely imagined, but because he believed it to have Divine warrant, or had received special directions from the Risen Saviour.<sup>a</sup>

42. AT PENTECOST (Acts ii. 14-40). In the wonderful events of that memorable day which has been termed "the birthday of the Christian Church," the central figure is again "the pilot of the Galilean lake." The state of expectancy ends when the disciples, assembled again probably in the upper room (the chamber already consecrated, as many think, by the Last Supper), are taken possession of by the new power which has for its signs the rushing wind and the parting fire-like tongues, and for its immediate effect that gift of tongues about which so much variety of opinion still subsists. The mysterious gift, and all the strange excitement are explained by some as the frenzy of intoxication.

<sup>a</sup> Let the renderings of the Revised Version in verses 17, 20, 22 be noticed.



Peter stands forth to repudiate the base interpretation,<sup>a</sup> and expound what the wonderful phenomena mean. The great discourse which he delivers to the vast crowd is notable for the boldness with which he speaks of Jesus as the Christ, and charges his hearers with the guilt of crucifying the Holy One of God. He points to the events of the day as fulfilments of the promise, given by one of their own prophets, of an outpouring of the Spirit of God. He speaks of the counsel of God and the wickedness of men as meeting in the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth; of the great assurance expressed in the xvi. Psalm as finally realised in the resurrection of Christ; and of David's word in the cx. Psalm as a prophecy of Christ's reign at Jehovah's right hand. The result of this discourse, and of Peter's exhortations to repentance, was the baptism of some three thousand souls. The Day of Pentecost completes the change in Peter himself, which the painful discipline of his fall, and all the lengthened process of previous training have been slowly making. He is now no more the unreliable, changeful, self-confident man, ever swaying between rash courage and weak timidity, but the steadfast, trusted guide and director of the fellowship of believers, the intrepid preacher of Christ in Jerusalem and abroad. And now that he is become Cephas indeed we hear almost nothing of the name Simon (only in Acts x. 5, 32; xv. 14), and he is known to us finally as *Peter*.

43. THE MIRACLE AT THE TEMPLE GATE (Acts iii.). The apostle's gifts of rule and administration must have been put to a severe test by the sudden enlargement of the Church by so great a multitude of converts. The picture given (cf. Acts ii. 41-47) of the inner life of the Church shows that these gifts were happily exercised. After an interval,

<sup>a</sup> The "third hour of the day" was the hour for the morning sacrifice. It was the Israelite's duty to fast every day till this hour, and till mid-day at the great festivals.

the extent of which is not stated, we find Peter and John again associated at a critical time. Still conforming to the ancestral Jewish modes of worship, they go up together to the Temple at the hour for the evening sacrifice (cf. Exod. xxix. 41 ; Numb. xxviii. 3). Amid the crowd usually found in and about the Temple at that hour they come upon a lame beggar, laid in his misery and helplessness at one of the gates, which was known popularly by the name Beautiful. This is identified by some with the Shushan Gate, between the Women's Court and that of the Israelites, by others more probably with the Gate of Nicanor,—a magnificent structure of Corinthian brass, the most splendid and the most crowded of all. They answer his cry for alms by healing him in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.<sup>a</sup> The marvel of so instant and complete a cure, effected on one well known to many as a cripple, draws together a great concourse in the porch which was called Solomon's, because it was built on a mound erected by him. Peter seizes the opportunity, and in this busiest section of the Temple, the cloister which was hallowed by recollections of Christ's own testimony to Himself (John x. 23), delivers his second great discourse to the people. This discourse is remarkable among other things for its doctrine of Christ, and not less for its view of the issues dependent on repentance. It presents Christ in official rather than personal aspects. It speaks of Him, indeed, as "the Holy One and the Just" (cf. Isaiah xliii. 3 ; Luke iv. 34 ; Mk. i. 24 ; Rev. iii. 7, xv. 4 ; James v. 6 ; John ii. 1). But it describes Him specifically as the "Prince of Life" (*i.e.*, the *leader* or *author* of life ; cf. ch. v. 31, and Heb. ii. 10, xii. 2, where the same term is used). It gives Him the Old Testament title (Isaiah xlii., liii., being probably in Peter's mind), "Servant" of God, which expressed His

<sup>a</sup> Observe Luke's use of technical terms in verse 7, and the point of the "leaping" in verse 8.

official relation to God, not his Divine Sonship. It cites the great prophecy of the rising of a Prophet like unto Moses (Deut. xviii. 15) as fulfilled in Christ. It speaks again of "seasons of refreshing," which Messiah's Second Coming is to usher in, and of "times of restoration of all things," times of moral renewal and rectification, which must precede that Advent. But it represents that Advent itself, and those seasons and times, as well as the blotting out of Israel's sins, as events suspended on Israel's repentance. Peter presses Israel's brightest hopes and most characteristic ideas as irresistible reasons for the instant repentance of his hearers. <sup>a</sup>

44. THE BEGINNINGS OF PERSECUTION (Acts iv.). The miracle at the Temple Gate is selected, out of others wrought by the apostles (cf. ch. ii. 43), for detailed recital by reason of the crisis which it hastened. It convinced the Jewish authorities that the rise of the new religion could not be let alone, and became the turning-point between sufferance and persecution. The prime movers in the policy of intolerance are not the bigoted Pharisees, but the rationalistic Sadducees. Alarmed at the access which the apostles are having to the people, and offended by the preaching of the resurrection, this party comes with the priests and the captain of the Temple (the officer charged with the care of the night-watches and the command of the Levites on duty), and carries the preachers off to prison. The apprehension does nothing to check the growth of the Church. The ranks of the believers numbered already 5000 men, besides women and children, and additions continued to be made to them (cf. ch. v. 14, vi. 1-7, xxi. 20). Peter takes the spokesman's place at the bar, and speaks so boldly and convinc-

<sup>a</sup> Notice the important corrections of the Authorised Version, which are adopted by the Revised in this chapter, specially "servant" for "son" in verses 13, 26; "that so" for "when" in verse 19; and "that he may send" for "he shall send" in verse 20.



ingly that the rulers are fain to do no more than dismiss their prisoners with a threatening. The two apostles meet the command to speak or teach no more with the memorable reply (verses 19-20), in which the rights of conscience—rights which princes have been so slow to allow to subjects, which one religious belief has been so slow to allow to another—are intrepidly asserted. Their return to the brethren is followed by a burst of prayer, in the sublime terms of which, as it has been said with some reason, "we seem to recognise Peter's voice as the leader of the supplication" (Green). The designation of his Lord again as God's Servant (verse 20, not "child" as in the Authorised), the appeal to the Second Psalm (compare the citation of Psalm cxviii. in verse 11), the reference to the rulers and people as doing only what the hand and counsel of God "determined before to be done" (cf. ii. 23), bear the impress of Peter's mind.

45. THE FIRST CALL FOR DISCIPLINE (Acts v. 1-16). The writer of the Book of Acts leads us at once from the beautiful picture of the life of concord and self-sacrifice in the Church, of which Barnabas the Levite is an illustrious instance, to the first great danger to the Church from within itself. The community of goods which prevailed was simply the form in which the first fresh sense of brotherhood in Christ naturally expressed itself, a purely religious and spontaneous resignation of private rights, in no way akin to the wild Communistic schemes of later days. It seems to have taken shape, too, only within the Church of Jerusalem, and the deep poverty of the mother Church has been supposed by many to have been due to evils which soon emerged in connection with the custom. In any case it was this community of goods that planted the first root of bitterness in the infant Church. There were those who were equally unable to resist the popular current, and to cherish the grace

that gave it meaning. When Ananias and Sapphira came with a show of liberality, offering the part as if it were the whole, Peter recognised the gravity of the occurrence. He interpreted their act as an attempt to deceive the Holy Ghost, who ruled within the Church and guided the apostles, and pronounced first upon the one and then upon the other the doom of swift and sudden death. It has been thought to explain their fate as due to a stroke of paralysis, or a rush of sudden terror. But the writer clearly refers it to Peter's sentence, and regards it as the effect of a power committed to him. It was the first and most terrible exercise of discipline within the Church which is recorded in the New Testament. The severity of the judgment is in strong contrast with subsequent cases, even those of Elymas and Simon Magus. It had its justification in the deep aggravations of the offence,—an offence so gratuitous, so deliberately premeditated, implying so impious a defiance of God, perpetrated in the sacred circle of faith and charity. It had its justification still more in the peculiar position of the offence, at the beginning of a new order of the Kingdom of God. On the outbreak of idolatry at the giving of the Law, on the usurpation of Nadab and Abihu, and on the rebellion of Korah, extraordinary judgments vindicated the ordinances and official servants of God. So in the case of the first attempt to insinuate evil into the new development of the Divine Kingdom, God's "strange work" was needed to vindicate Apostolic authority and protect the Church. Its effect was to secure the brotherhood against the intrusion of false members, to inspire the populace with fears, which meant safety for the mass of believers, and to carry Peter's influence and name to such a height that men credited his very shadow with miraculous powers.

46. THE RENEWAL OF PERSECUTION (Acts v. 17-42). The growth of the Christian cause led to

a fresh outburst of passion and violence, in which the Sadducees again were the leaders. The Apostles (the whole body now, as we may probably infer from verse 29), were thrown into the common prison. A wonderful deliverance befell them in the night, and when the Council met in the morning they were found teaching in the Temple the words that brought the gift of eternal life. They were seized a second time, but now without violence, and were charged with the crime of resistance to constituted authority. The prisoners, led by Peter, repeated in still more decisive terms the assertion, which was formerly made by Peter and John (ch. iv. 19), of the supreme claims of God and conscience, and again testified of the Risen Christ. The high priest and the Sadducean party, though roused to furious hate ("cut to the heart" in verse 33 is the rendering of a verb which expresses the cutting of a saw, as in Heb. xi. 37), dismissed the Apostles after beating them. The counsel of a distinguished member of the opposite party, who pointed to the issue of two former popular risings, restrained them from more violent measures. The Pharisee who intervened in the interests of prudence and tolerance has been usually identified (although positive historical evidence is wanting) with the Gamaliel under whom Saul of Tarsus was a learner,—the great Rabban, grandson of Hillel, the celebrated head of the school which opposed the narrow fanaticism of that of Shammai.

47. IN SAMARIA (Acts viii. 5-25). The mother Church was now securely planted, the difficulty with the Hellenists (ch. vi.) was settled, and the appointment of deacons carried through. The time had come when Peter could leave Jerusalem and carry his gifts elsewhere. A door was opened for him first in Samaria, a province distinguished for its enmity to the Jews, its half-pagan, half-Judaic worship, and its liking for the tricks and juggleries of the many sorcerers and wizards who wandered from land to



land over the East. Jesus Himself had travelled through this alien territory, and at Sychar had taught a Samaritan woman the worship of God (John iv.). But when He first sent forth His apostles two by two (Matt. x. 5), He had charged them to enter into no Samaritan city. This considerate restriction was removed when He instructed them, after His Resurrection, to be witnesses of Him not only in Jerusalem and all Judea, but in *Samaria*, and "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8). The way was now open for taking up this larger commission. The persecution in Jerusalem had driven Philip (not the apostle, but the deacon or evangelist; cf. ch. vi. 5, xxi. 8), to a place described as "*the city of Samaria*," which some identify with the capital, known then as Sebasté, others with Sychar. Here he gathered and baptised many converts. When the tidings reached Jerusalem, Peter and John were deputed to visit them and impart the gift of the Holy Ghost, which seems then to have been dependent on the prayers of the apostles and the laying on of their hands. The two were thus again in the territory in which one of them once would have had fire called down from heaven upon an inhospitable village (Luke ix. 51-56). Here Simon Peter had to confront another Simon, a notable sorcerer who had formerly wielded vast influence over the people, but had now professed belief in Jesus. It was probably the wonders wrought by Philip's hand that occasioned the sorcerer's vague adhesion for the time to the new faith. The greater wonders wrought by the two apostles, wonders which might seem to Simon Magus tokens of the possession of magical powers surpassing any formerly professed by himself, tempted him to crave, with an offer of money, a share in the marvellous gift. Peter's stern rejection of the bribe, his call to repentance, his declaration of the man as one still in the bitterness of enmity to grace and in the chains of iniquity,

were the fit answer to a request which had its motive in covetousness of a power which would add *eclat* to the sorcerer's art. They drew from him the entreaty that by the prayers of the Apostles he might escape what was threatened him. But they drew from him nothing more. <sup>a</sup>

48. PETER WITH PAUL AT JERUSALEM (Acts ix. 26-30 ; Gal. i. 17-24 ; cf. also Acts xxii. 17-21, xxvi. 20). After their work among the Samaritan villages, the two apostles returned to Jerusalem, and reported the results. Here we lose sight of John, so far as the Book of Acts is concerned. Peter probably continued to exercise his ministry in Jerusalem for a period. At this juncture occurred the memorable meeting between Peter and Paul, of which the latter speaks in one of his letters. For the narrative given in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, though it deals with the event in an entirely independent manner, is rightly taken to refer to the occasion recorded in Acts ix. 26-30.

<sup>a</sup> Simon, it is said, gave out that "himself was some great one" (verse 9). According to Irenæus, one of the earlier fathers, Simon claimed that in him the Three Persons of the Trinity manifested themselves. The people, it is stated in verse 10 (according to the correct reading adopted by the Revised Version), said of him, "This man is that power of God which is called great." This is explained as indicating that they held him to be the highest of the Divine powers "emanating from God, and appearing and working among them as a human person" (Meyer)—an opinion which may have to some degree prepared them for the preaching of an Incarnation of Deity. Tradition has vastly added to the account of Simon which is given in the Book of Acts. So early as the second century it was affirmed that he visited Rome; by another century Peter and he were held to have met a second time in controversy, the scene being Cæsarea; the encounter is next shifted by tradition from Cæsarea to Rome: and at last the tradition develops into the grotesque form of a description of the sorcerer challenging Peter, the bishop of Rome, to settle their rival claims by flying through the air. A very circumstantial story is given by Justin Martyr to the effect that a statue was erected in Rome in honour of Simon, and that it bore the inscription, *Simoni Deo Sancto*, i.e., To Simon, the Holy God. That this story originated in a misreading of the inscription appears from the fact that an altar was dug up in the vicinity three centuries ago having the title, *Semoni Deo Sanco*, i.e., To the god Semo Sancus,—a Sabine deity anciently worshipped there.

That Paul attached great importance to this interview with Peter, appears from the terms in which he describes his object in going up to Jerusalem. It was "to see Cephas" (Gal. i. 18; according to the better supported reading), and the word which Paul uses here for *seeing* or *visiting* is one generally used, as was long ago observed, of those "who go to see great and famous cities." The brethren in the mother Church seem to have hesitated how to receive him. But the kindly help of Barnabas introduced him to the fellowship of the apostles. He had fifteen days' brotherly intercourse with Peter ere he had to leave the city in consequence of the plot against him. This was not the only occasion on which the two great apostles met. But a surpassing interest attaches to this first meeting between Peter and Paul after the conversion of the latter. We long to know what they talked of during this eventful fortnight. But we are not told what took place between them.

49. PETER AT LYDDA AND JOPPA (Acts ix. 32-43). A period of rest had come to the Church (Acts ix. 31), due, as some think, to the impression produced by the conversion of so notable a persecutor as Saul, but more probably to the fact that the attention of the Jews was absorbed by the mad attempt of the Roman Emperor, Caligula, to place his statue in the Temple. During this period Peter felt free to leave Jerusalem, and resume his missionary journeys. We find him at Lydda (afterwards Diospolis), a large village in the fertile plain of Saron or Sharon, which lies along the Mediterranean Coast. Here he wrought a great miracle of healing on the palsied Enĕas, which was followed by the general conversion of the district. We find him next at the important seaport, Joppa, the modern Jaffa, in which town, as also in Lydda, the foundations of a Christian Church seem already to have been laid. What brought him there was an urgent summons sent him by the disciples



(quickened perhaps by the report of what had taken place at Lydda), who were in grief over the death of a Christian sister, by name Tabitha in Aramaic, Dorcas in Greek (= gazelle), who had been distinguished for her charitable works. Joppa became the scene of the first miracle of the raising of the dead which was wrought, so far as we learn from the Book of Acts, by the hand of an apostle. Attempting it in the name of Christ, Peter seems, in his method of performing it, to have followed his own recollections of what Christ Himself did in the calm and privacy of the chamber of Jairus' daughter.

50. **PETER AND CORNELIUS** (Acts xv.). The time had now come when practical effect was to be fully given to the breaking down of the middle wall of partition between the Jew and the Gentile, and the latter was to be admitted into the Christian Church on equal terms with the former. The man by whom the step at last was taken, which was so alien to all ancestral religious sentiment, was the Galilean Peter. It was not taken, however, until his mind had been well prepared for it. The fact that Peter, who remained in Joppa, lodged in the house of a Simon, whose trade was that of a tanner, a trade reckoned unclean among the Jews by reason of its having to do with dead animals, shows that there had been a great loosening of the Jewish exclusiveness in this Apostle. The critical importance of the event leads the historian to record with uncommon detail the circumstances under which it took place. It turned upon two visions which made two very different men, living in two different seaport towns, ready for it. One vision appeared to a devout soldier in command of a cohort of the Roman forces which was known as the Italian band (probably so called as consisting not of Jews but of natives of Italy), and was stationed in Caesarea, the great maritime city, some forty miles north of Joppa,

which was the seat of the Roman procurator. As the centurion's messengers, despatched in obedience to the Divine intimation, neared Joppa, another vision was sent to Peter on the house-top, whither he had retired for prayer. The vision took its shape from the circumstances in which the apostle was then found—alone, praying, probably brooding over the problem of the Gentiles, and fasting. He failed at first to understand its message. With the old precipitance which had flamed forth in the solemn feet-washing (John xiii. 8) he started back from the idea of eating what was common or unclean. The thrice recurring voice overcame his bluntness, and made him ready to meet the messengers and go with them to Caesarea. He went, accompanied by a band of fellow-believers from Joppa, and was welcomed in Caesarea. Checking the centurion's impulse to worship him, he spoke freely of the way in which his Jewish difficulty had been overcome, and as he was speaking the Holy Ghost fell upon his Gentile hearers. His discourse is remarkable for the simple account it gives of Christ as One who did good, who was anointed with the Holy Ghost and had God with Him, who died and rose again, and was "ordained to be the Judge of quick and dead." It is interesting, too, for expressions and ideas which meet us again in the Epistles, *e.g.*, that God is no respecter of persons (1 Pet. i. 17). It has been disputed whether Cornelius was a Jewish proselyte or a pure Gentile. If he was the latter (and ch. x. 28, 34, 35; xi. 1, 18; xv. 7, seem to favour that), he was the first instance of a Gentile convert being admitted at once into the Christian Church without having to submit to anything belonging to the Jewish theocracy, and the importance of the event in which Peter was the prime mover becomes the greater.

## POINTS FOR FURTHER ENQUIRY.

1. *The apparent discrepancies between the Gospels and the Book of Acts as regards the fate of Judas.*
2. *The use of the lot in Old Testament times.*
3. *Peter's interpretation of Psalm xvi. in his Pentecostal address.*
4. *Particulars of the risings under Theudas and Judas.*
5. *Explanation of the differences in the two accounts of Paul's first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion.*
6. *The question whether Cornelius was a proselyte or not.*

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 CHAPTER VII.

## FROM THE ADMISSION OF CORNELIUS TO THE END.

51. **PETER'S DEFENCE AT JERUSALEM** (Acts xi. 1-18). Peter seems to have remained some time at Caesarea, and to have mingled freely with his Gentile brethren. On his return to Jerusalem his disregard of the old Jewish restrictions was made matter of complaint. No fault was found with his preaching to the Gentiles. What the stringent party of the circumcision could not brook was his having eaten with the uncircumcised. The statement which he gave at a gathering of the disciples in Jerusalem of the simple facts of the case, however, carried his hearers with him. The difficulty was set aside for the time. Peter's defence is notable for his appeal to words of the Lord Jesus which he had in remembrance. His First Epistle contains many sentences which read like echoes of sayings of Christ, which, once heard by the Apostle in the holy days of the circuits in Judea and Galilee, lived in his memory and came naturally to his mouth.



52. PETER'S IMPRISONMENT AND DELIVERANCE (Acts xii. 1-19). We hear nothing of Peter in connection either with the publication of the Gospel to the Grecians, or with what followed on the prophecy of Agabus (Acts xi. 19-30). When he is next mentioned, he is again in Jerusalem, and at the post of danger. Herod Agrippa, the son of Aristobulus and Berenice, and grandson of Herod the Great, was at the head of affairs. This wily, pleasure-loving, and inconstant prince, among other things which his thirst for popularity led him to attempt in order to secure the favour of his Jewish subjects, martyred James, the brother of John, and next threw Peter into prison. The king's jealous orders, which had set sixteen soldiers to keep guard over his notable prisoner in relays of four, and had chained him to a soldier on either side (double the ordinary precaution) in the night, were of no avail. The Church had given itself to prayer, and the Apostle was led out, not realising what was befalling him, by the angel of God. Luke describes with the most graphic truthfulness Peter's arrival at the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, the knocking at the gate, the surprised flight of Rhoda, the incredulity of those within, who took it to be his guardian angel, and the anxiety of Peter, when he was once admitted, that tidings of his deliverance should be conveyed to James (that is, the Lord's brother) and the brethren.<sup>a</sup> It is added that he "departed and went into another place." The historian gives no hint of what place this was to which Peter betook himself for safety. It is certain enough, however, that it was not that which the Romish Church has been wishful to make it—Rome. We find him too soon again in Jerusalem to make that a reasonable conjecture.

53. PETER AND THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM (Acts xv. 1-31 ; Gal. ii. 1-10). Peter's voice

<sup>a</sup> See Keble's stanzas for St Peter's Day in the *Christian Year*.

is heard next on the side of liberality and charity in connection with what is rightly described as "the most burning question of the time" (Meyer). The old difficulty which had been settled for a time by Peter's frank defence at Jerusalem, rose afresh. It broke out now in Antioch, the stronghold of Gentile Christianity. The Church here had been invaded by men from Judea, whom Paul speaks of as false brethren, who came in surreptitiously with the intention of forcing the yoke of the Mosaic law upon the Gentile converts, and demanded the circumcision of Titus. The Church of Antioch, unable to set the matter at rest, deputed Paul and Barnabas to consult the mother Church on the subject. At a meeting at Jerusalem, over which James presided, and which consisted of all the apostles and elders and the whole Church, the question was considered, and a unanimous decision reached. This gave the Gentiles the liberty which was their Gospel right, and imposed nothing upon them beyond the law of abstinence from certain things, to the sinfulness of which the Gentile conscience might not be over sensitive, and from others which, while not sinful in themselves, might form stumbling blocks in social intercourse. To this wise conclusion Peter made an important contribution. His was the first word of formal counsel. His testimony to the mission he had himself received, to the gift of the Holy Ghost bestowed on the Gentiles, to the fact that God made no difference between circumcised and uncircumcised in the purifying power of His Grace, and to the danger attending the imposition of the Mosaic yoke, was taken up by the president, and decided the question. Thus, Peter again met Paul in the capital city, and proved himself in harmony with his large and liberal reading of the Gospel message. From this point Peter disappears from the page of the Book of Acts, and Paul engrosses its narrative.

54. PETER DISSEMBLING (Gal. ii. 11-16). The

Epistle to the Galatians gives us a glimpse of another meeting between Peter and Paul. This time it was like the "collision of two thunder clouds" (Reed). After the great Convention at Jerusalem Peter visited Antioch, the very heart of the Gentile Churches, and at first kept true to the principles he had so nobly affirmed in the heart of the Jewish Churches. There came men from Jerusalem, however, perhaps using James's name, who took offence at Peter's freedom. What they rose against may have been not the liberty allowed the Gentile Christians themselves, but the spectacle of an apostle conforming to Gentile custom, and disregarding the sacred requirements of the Jewish law. Once more Peter's firmness failed him. Perhaps in mere inconsiderateness, perhaps from false deference to the scruples of others, he withdrew from the free terms on which he had been living with the Gentile brethren. The mistake threatened to carry serious consequences in its train. Even Barnabas was carried off by it. Paul saw the danger of the policy, and publicly rebuked Peter to his face. He does not tell us in his great Epistle how the rebuke was taken. But there is no reason to suppose that it disturbed the brotherly relations of the two men (cf. 2 Peter iii. 15), and on no other occasion does Peter seem ever to have faltered in his practice in this matter.

**55. PETER'S LATER HISTORY.** From this point the New Testament gives no light upon Peter's career beyond what may be gathered from a few references in the Epistles. We learn that he was joined by Mark, who had worked with Barnabas, and been with Paul at Rome (1 Pet. v. 13; Col. iv. 10), and that Silvanus, the associate of Paul, was the bearer of one of his letters (1 Pet. v. 12). It is left uncertain how far his missionary labours extended. If the Babylon mentioned in 1 Pet. v. 13 is to be taken in the mystic sense which it has



in the Apocalypse, we must trace him to Rome. If it is to be taken in the literal sense, we must suppose him to have carried the Gospel as far East as the city on the Euphrates which represented the great Babylon of imperial times. A vast edifice of tradition and legend has reared itself in the soil left vacant by the New Testament history. The Papal tradition is to the effect, that he was the founder and first bishop of Rome, that he ruled there some five and twenty years, and that he suffered martyrdom there along with Paul, being crucified at his own request with his head downwards. Among other legends there is one to the effect, that when the Neronian persecution set in, he yielded to the pressure of his disciples to seek safety by flight, but that as he got beyond the gate, he had a vision in which Christ appeared to him, and in answer to his question, "Lord, whither goest Thou?" spake the words, "I go to Rome to be crucified yet again;" on hearing which the apostle retraced his steps, to meet his fate in the city. But for this and much more there is no historic foundation. The most that can be said is, that it is not altogether improbable that he may have been in Rome toward the end of his career, and that his death probably took place between 64 and 67 A.D.

**56. THE FIRST EPISTLE.** There is an early tradition, which has not a little to support it, that Mark was so closely associated with Peter as his amanuensis or the interpreter of his words that the Second Gospel bears the impress of Peter's version of the facts of his Lord's life. The direct authorship of two of the New Testament Epistles is ascribed to him. The first of these is so strongly attested by early external testimony, that the Church accepted it from the first as undoubtedly Peter's. There are many unsolved problems, however, still connected with it. It is uncertain whether the Churches to which it is addressed consisted, as the opening desig-

nation at first suggests, mainly of Jews, or, as such passages as ch. i. 14-18 ; ii. 9-10 ; iii. 6 ; iv. 3, seem rather to imply, mainly of Gentiles. The place from which it was sent is stated to be Babylon (ch. v. 13). But opinion is divided, as has been already indicated, between the literal reading of the word, as the Babylon on the Euphrates, and the figurative reading of it as Rome. As to the date of the Epistle, the most reasonable opinion is that it was written near the close of the apostle's life, probably about 66 A.D. The Churches to which it is directed are planted either in countries into which the Gospel was carried by Paul, or in territories which had received the Gospel by hands unknown to us. The former is the case with those in Galatia (cf. Acts xvi. 6 ; xix. 10) and Asia (cf. Acts xviii. 23 ; xix. 1). The latter is the case with those in Pontus, Cappadocia, and Bithynia. The Epistle has ever been recognised as among the most precious of all in the New Testament. It has many points of affinity with the Epistle of James, the First Epistle of John, and the Epistles to the Romans and the Ephesians. But it has a marked individuality. It contains not a few ideas and phrases which are peculiar to Peter, such as the "living hope" (ch. i. 3), the "conscience toward God" (ch. ii. 9), the description of baptism as "the answer of a good conscience toward God" (ch. iii. 21), the "gone into heaven" as used of Christ (ch. iii. 22), the "kiss of charity" (ch. v. 14), the profoundly difficult statements about the preaching to the spirits in prison (ch. iii. 19-20), and the preaching of the Gospel to them that are dead (ch. iv. 6), &c. It has its own method of expressing the truth as to the Person and the work of Christ. It is constructed on a less systematic plan than any of Paul's great Epistles. It is distinguished by its constant reflection of the language and ideas of the Old Testament. Its prevailing tone is that of animation. Its prevailing object is to cheer and

strengthen tried disciples, by recalling the great facts of grace. It is so hopeful in tone that its author has been called distinctively the Apostle of hope.

57. THE SECOND EPISTLE. The claim of the Second Epistle to rank as Peter's has been almost as much doubted as the claim of the First has been allowed. It was doubted at a very early period, decidedly so by the fourth century. Gradually, however, it secured recognition as canonical, and held that position for many centuries until the question was again raised at the Reformation. The grounds on which these doubts proceed have been partly the scantiness of early historic testimony, partly things in the Epistle itself which are taken to imply dependence upon other writings, partly points on which it is supposed to differ materially from the First Epistle. These doubts have been met with so fair a measure of success that the Church of Christ for the most part has given it a place in the list of canonical books. It seems to be addressed to the same Churches as the former Epistle, and, if written by Peter, it must belong to the very close of his life. It has touching references to his old age and his impending death. It recalls the memorable scene on the Mount of Transfiguration. It is remarkable for the picture it gives of the unity of the Christian graces, for its view of prophecy, for its description of the last days, its doctrine of the final purification of the world by fire, its mention of Paul and his Epistles.

#### POINTS FOR FURTHER ENQUIRY.

1. *The meetings between Paul and Peter in Jerusalem—their number and circumstances.*
2. *Herod Agrippa's career.*
3. *The Jewish belief in guardian angels.*
4. *The Old Testament doctrine of angels.*
5. *The precepts of abstinence commended to Gentile Christians by the Council of Jerusalem, and the so-called Noachian precepts.*
6. *Points of likeness and difference between the two Epistles.*



